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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

REVISIONARY DRAMA:
A STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN HISTORY PLAY

BY

DON PERKINS ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Edmonton, Alberta
SPRING 1993

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faulty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled REVISIONARY DRAMA: A STUDY OF THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN HISTORY PLAY here submitted by DON PERKINS in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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Diane Bessai

Ronald Ayling

Jonathan H
Jonathan Hart

Douglas R. Owram

Robert Nunn
Robert C. Nunn

DATE: Dec. 14, 1992

DEDICATION

This is for my wife, Ewa and for my son, David, who have been seriously inconvenienced in the writing of it;

and for my mother, Berna (Hornby) Perkins, who never got to read it.

ABSTRACT

The dramatic reshaping for contemporary audiences of Canadians of events from Canadian history on the Canadian stage, was a common interest of writers and theatre companies of the contemporary Canadian professional theatre that emerged after 1965. Such plays help create such audiences by inviting them to recognize and evaluate a common past, and a consequent common present, though not necessarily on the "national" scale.

In addition to the essential, diachronic fact of relationships developed between play and audience, there are important, synchronic, historical relationships between the Canadian history play and Canadian historiography. Three important periods in which parallels in subject matter and cultural mythology are evident between the historiography and drama are the post-Confederation period, leading up to World War One; the period following World War One, continuing to the more contemporary period; and from 1965 to the early 1980s. In this last period, parallels in subject matter and social or political purpose lead to a large body of plays that adopt what is functionally a "melodramatic" form, a "David and Goliath" controlling myth pitting smaller interests or populations against larger in conflicts that are moral as well as dramatic.

This configuration of events is evident in plays depicting conflicts that promote or grow from regional

interests or experiences, as exemplified in plays based on Saskatchewan history or in the Donnelly plays originating in southwestern Ontario; women's history, especially the suffragist movement; racial history, involving "first contacts" between aboriginal people and Europeans, and between established white populations and coloured immigrant populations; and the history of class conflict. The "moral" concerns link with the political and cultural, and develop a sense not only of the Canada that is, but of the one that could have been, and could yet be, if and when the "better" traits that have been defeated or suppressed eventually prevail.

PREFACE

Is there a "Canadian Historical Play," that is, a play that is uniquely, identifiably different from the history play as written or developed elsewhere, and elsewhen? My answer to this would be "Yes," based on my understanding of what the history play as a genre is and does. This involves five elements, in combination: content, audience, intent, form and the historiographical background out of which the play is written.

Content, audience and intent are effectively inseparable. I assume that a history play is written out of the shared past of the audience for whom it is originally intended, however that audience may be defined: a nation, a class, a region, a race, a gender, a locale, etc. A history play may even be seen as a means for that group or audience to see or think of itself as a group, a population with a shared past, something that gives it a shared present. That invitation, implicit or explicit, is part of the "didactic" intent frequently engaged in by the history play. There are certainly plays written on events or figures from Canadian history, many more than I discuss in the thesis that follows. A Canadian history play would be one that invites an audience that at one level or another would designate itself as Canadian--albeit perhaps as hyphenated-Canadians, or an audience that would use the "Canadian" as an adjective, as in "Canadian workers," Canadian women," etc.--

to recognize itself as Canadian by virtue of a shared past that has helped shape or define its present. That audience need not be (indeed may never functionally be or have been) "Canada" as a whole.

At any time in the history of Canadian historical playwriting, plays have tended to focus on the issues of the kind of people "we" are or would like to be, and the kind of society "we" have or would like to have. There is a also a longing to see a "completed" Canada, reflected in a consistent searching for what the "finished" Canada will look and act like. In plays up to the middle of this century, there is a tendency to portray Canada as finished, to include scenes that looked forward to the kind of Canada the original audience could identify as its present--particularly if that audience happened to be reasonably affluent, urban, and of European (preferably British) origins. In such plays, the "finished" Canada often emerges more as an ideal than a reality, in plays that are overtly or covertly propagandistic. When, for example, the principles of Canadian Imperialism appear to define the finished Canada looked forward to by characters in Charles Mair's Tecumseh, Mair is giving his countrymen a nudge in the direction he prefers the country to continue moving. When Catharine Nina Merritt celebrates the vision and character of the United Empire Loyalists, in When George the Third Was King, and has one of her characters look forward to the kind of Canada Merritt's audience might see as their own present, she does the same. More recently, in the period my study focuses on, a Canadian history play seems to see a "finished" Canada that looks like a part of the present, in a country that is still (even perpetually) "becoming."

Formal considerations enter into the equations because a history play, as a play, engages its audience not just with a re-enactment of the past but with a dramatic or theatrical restructuring of the past, that recreates the past as dramatic action. That is, a history play uses the techniques of characterization and emplotment, and expectations raised by underlying dramatic genres, to recreate lives and events from the past into characters and stories that the audience can respond to as "our stories," or as part of "our story." Is there, then, a "Canadian History Play" that is different not just in content and implied audience, but in form, identifiable for how it does its work? Provisionally, I would argue that a Canadian history play is not unique in formal terms: examples can be found that incorporate the major dramatic modes, singly or in combination. No one form is, or need be considered, "best" for historical plays. The form must, however, match the didactic aims of particular piece of historical drama.

Finally, I believe that for a history play to be truly "historical," it must demonstrate a link to the historical interests or projects of its time and audience, as well as to the theatrical or dramatic. The didactic aims of a history play are often defined by, or at least in part paralleled by, the historical or historiographical focus and aims, perhaps even the historical myths, of the time and place in which it is written. The play may be written to expand or support a common myth, or to attempt to subvert it. It may be written as part of a common interest in what kind of history is appropriate or popular at the time the play is written, or to attempt to show up what is wrong with the common or popular. In my "Introduction," below, I suggest ways that Canadian historical plays have done this at three separate stages of Canadian political and cultural history.

The historiographic didactic purpose also influences the form of the play. The body of my thesis explores a formal consideration common to, and, I suggest, a product of, the third of these stages, the "contemporary" period, from the mid-Sixties to the early Eighties--the period when professional theatre and professional playwriting became an established part of the Canadian cultural scene. I focus on those plays that take on a melodramatic tone, or rely on a melodramatic configuration for all or much of their impact.

My interest in this formal aspect is partly the result of the process through which I came to write this thesis at all. I was first struck by Paul Thompson's claim in an interview with Robert Wallace, in The Work: Conversations with English-Canadian Playwrights, that Canadian history is not yet written because we have not "made it ours," have not transformed it into "current language" (241). This task he saw as the responsibility of theatre a "current" art that "only lives when it's happening." Like many in Canadian theatre (see the Introduction, below) Thompson seemed to feel that "real" history, written by "real" historians, and passed on in books and classrooms, was not doing its job for Canadians. I began to wonder what historians had been doing, or had thought they were doing, so began to investigate Canadian historiography, and Canadian cultural and political myths as developed by historians at the same time I was reading the history plays that appeared over the course of Canadian theatre history. I realize that historiographic analysis looks at general, large-scale trends, and that many types of history may be in production at any one time. I was interested, though, in what reputable historians saw as the dominant historical interests or focuses of their times. In particular, I was interested in what history was like or attempting in the most recent period, the period in which Thompson and his theatrical peers sought to "write," or "right," Canadian history in theatrical terms. That is, I began with the fact of Canadian history plays, and sought to relate them to the writing of Canadian history "proper."

This led me eventually to Carl Berger, and his award-winning study The Writing of Canadian History. Looking at the period after 1965, Berger noted that the interests of historians turned away from the issue of "nationalism," as they began to look at the experiences of smaller populations or interest groups within the Canadian whole. It did not take long to see that many of the history plays of the period similarly dealt with the experiences of such populations or interest groups, usually (though by no means always) as that original audience. This led me to divide my body of plays into groups that paralleled such interests, a decision that, I admit, probably prejudiced the selection as well towards plays that would exhibit a formal tendency to divide the conflict into a melodramatically binary "us vs them," "smaller vs larger," configuration, especially in as much as the plays tend to promote the interests and concerns, and to invite a sense of community among the "oppressed" or neglected smaller population.

A second historiographical, or sociological, factor further influenced the selection of plays. Berger notes that a major influence on the writing of history in this period was a pervasive taste for "reform" of the country and its institutions. This taste was one frequently shared by the writers, and, it appears, was one they hoped was alive in their audiences--after the performances if not before. A play written to promote reform would also, frequently, favour a form that would clearly identify the rationale for reform, the type of reform necessary, and the desirable direction and "face" or "voice" of the reformed society. Such interests, again, invite a melodramatic configuration, idealizing one behaviour or interest over another.

I wish to emphasize that I use the term "melodramatic" here strictly as an adjective describing a type of dramatic mode: I neither attach nor intend any pejorative implications by using the term in this way, although the structure does tend to reduce the historical and dramatic complexity in many plays. While some writers use it consciously, seeking to capture the tone of public debate (see, e.g., Rex Deverell's comments regarding Medicare!, below, Chapter 2), at other times the melodramatic configuration that underlies so many of these plays may not represent a deliberate attempt on the part of the writers to limit historical vision to what often comes across as a series of two-dimensional conflicts. It may instead reflect the historical naivete, the political or social interests, or the limited playwriting experience of the writers (or, of course, a combination of any or all of these).

My exploration of the implications and consequences of such melodramatic, reform-minded recreation or revising of Canadian history is intended, finally, not as the last word on the Canadian history play (indeed, if I thought a "last word" were possible, I could doubt the worth of research into the field in the first place). It is offered in the spirit of a further word, as part of a developing dialogue over what the history play in general, and the Canadian history play specifically, is and does. Other interesting and necessary "words"--or paths not taken here, but worth following--are easily identified. One such would trace the uses of broad dramatic genres, such as tragedy, comedy, melodrama and farce, individually, or in combination, or the developments of theatrical types, such as documentary treatments of history. (Farce, in my experience, is not a mode that has been well used by Canadian playwrights--except, perhaps, in the "burlesquing" evident in Redlight Theatre's What Glorious Times They Had, where it helps cartoon the two sides of the dispute. Farce usually appears as an attempt at an "irreverent look" at Canadian history, a look that may not so much undermine the stolidity of historiography as trivialize the events portrayed.)

Had I followed the paths of varying modes, I would have selected many different plays, probably involving more plays based on the lives of individuals, and fewer on the experience of groups. Such a reading would also involve greater attention to the boundaries of genres, and to the shifting shades of definition within and among genres. Much necessary work remains to be done in this regard.

Another path that needs further work would seek to place Canadian historical plays within the context of other Canadian "literary" reappropriations of history, such as the novel and the poem (especially the "long" poem). In this regard, one could begin with Dennis Duffy's claim in Sounding the Iceberg, that the Canadian historical novel appeared as a serious form in the early 1970s--a period that coincides with the plays of the "contemporary" period. Do novelists such as Rudy Wiebe, Timothy Findley, Anne Hebert or Graeme Gibson (all the subject of Duffy's inquiry) favour similar subject matter? Do they make similar or parallel formal decisions? One would also parallel the history play at many stages of Canadian literary history with long narrative or epic poems written on historical subject matter.

One could also usefully consider Canadian history plays within a context of historical plays written elsewhere at the same period. Such a perspective would provide some interesting parallels, and in the case of British historical plays of the period, turn up some intriguing ironies, especially given the Canadian theatrical objective of breaking the cultural tie with things British. Similarities between Canadian and British history plays of the period emerge in that the British plays frequently also focus on the experiences of smaller locales or interest groups--particularly class or gender interests. Such an analysis could prove useful comparisons and contrasts regarding formal treatment, based on the treatment of local content for different or parallel target audiences or types of audiences, didactic intent, and historiographic background, comparisons and contrasts that could further define what is "Canadian" about the Canadian history play.

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times helped refuel my own. All, moreover, have provided valuable editorial help in clarifying and refining the expression of the material. What infelicities remain are of my own devising.

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CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction--------------------------------1

Chapter Two: The Regional Anxieties of Saskatchewan-----58

Chapter Three: The Donnelly Region of Canada-----------160

Chapter Four: The Feminine/Feminist Shaping of Canada--206

Chapter Five: Racial Conflict in Canada----------------253

Chapter Six: Class Conflict in Canada------------------309

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: "Local" History and the "National" Dramatic Canon-------------------376

Notes:---391

Works Consulted:---------------------------------------399

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The past and cultural currency

Herbert Lindenberger makes an important, if understated, point when he observes: "It has long been a commonplace that historical plays are at least as much a comment on the playwright's own times as on the periods about which they are ostensibly written" (5). Historical plays are not just a "comment" on the period in which they are written, they are always reflections of historical, theatrical and dramatic tastes and practices of the times and places in which they are created. This commentary on and reflection of their particular "presents" is one of two important matters evidently overlooked by Don Rubin in "Celebrating the Nation," an article on Canadian historical plays--that is plays based on incidents from Canadian history, which he defines rather broadly to mean plays based on incidents that took place more than ten years before the play was written (18).[1] Rubin classifies plays according to the time _about_ which they are written, seeking for patterns in the metaphorical use made of these periods of the past. To do so, he brings together plays written over a period of nearly a century, from Charles Mair's _Tecumseh_ (1886) to Rex Deverell's _Black Powder: Estevan 1931_ (1981). In doing so he also brings together plays written for markedly different audiences, with differing concepts of what is appropriate history and differing senses of what history is for.

The second flaw in Rubin's scheme, one which actually works against some of Rubin's own objectives, is that it separates plays based on similar or analogous types of events that have happened at differing times in Canadian history, since the system fails to take into account the fact that Canada's history, as a reflection of European settlement at least, has a distinct East-to-West, temporally distant-to-recent bias.

Rubin's system for example, would bring together plays like Charles Mair's closet drama Tecumseh (1886) with a play like Michael Cook's Beyond the Rim of the Curve (1977), with its presentational documentary-style, simply because both deal with events before 1837. At the same time it would separate Cook's play from Herschel Hardin's versified Brechtian epic The Great Wave of Civilization (1976), set in the Blackfoot territories of southern Alberta and northern Montana, in the mid nineteenth century. Both deal with first contacts between native populations and European or white populations and the destruction of the native people as a result. The genocide of the Beothuks, historically, begins much earlier than the assault on Blackfoot culture in the west, but clearly the two plays are linked as examples of the type of plays written and produced for Canadian audiences in the mid 1970s, and of a type of historical subject matter popular at that time. As such, they have more in common with each other than with a play like

Tecumseh, set during the War of 1812. While Tecumseh also deals with early, if not exactly first, contacts and interactions between aboriginal and invading peoples, it reflects a much earlier time and writer, and the historical and dramatic tastes and practices of that time.

Plays are always written for an audience, and that audience is also, initially at least, always in the playwright's present, not his or her past. This principle holds as true for historical plays as for plays written on "contemporary" topics. Indeed, historical plays have as a necessary sub-theme or "central assertion" that history is "contemporary," that the past and the present are in some way continuous or contiguous (Lindenberger 6). The implications of the word "contiguous" deserve some consideration. In critical terms, contiguity is linked with a metonymic mode, where a writer condenses experience by selecting a part for the whole (Lodge 76).[2] Historical plays often seek to find a single life or incident, or sequence of events that can stand for the experience as a whole of a population. Coleridge seems to have recognized this principle when he declared "In order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed" (117). Otherwise, we can assume, the play appears, or risks appearing, as a period costume piece. For a historical play to be able to work, that is, to help educate or inform the audience about its shared past and present, the audience must recognize its own experience or past on that stage. Canadian historical plays are defined as much by their audience as by their subject matter.

Beyond the Rim of the Curve and The Great Wave of Civilization, to continue the example, are part of a concentration of historical plays created for and by the emerging new Canadian professional theatre that began to take its place in the Canadian cultural and literary mosaic by the late 1960s. These historical plays reflect that theatre's ongoing search for suitable Canadian topics, themes, subject matter and form. Historical plays are almost conventionally associated with the birth of a "national drama," and Canada would seem no exception.

At the same time, this concentration of historical plays in Canada is in part a response on the part of the theatre to what Carl Berger, in the second edition of his Governor General's Award-winning study, The Writing of Canadian History, identifies as an ambient popular "wave of nostalgia" (265), a "vogue of the past" (266) among Canadians at the time. Berger suggests that this surge of popular interest in history was "[i]nspired by the celebrations of the centenary of Confederation and sustained by a universal search for roots" and "expressed a hankering for direct contact with a visible, tangible 'living history'" (265). Periods of patriotic fervour or national crisis, or both, are often also conventionally recognized as stimulants to historical playwriting.[3] Clearly, Canada from 1967 on has seen a sequence of such provocations, in the Centennial, the Parti Quebecois election in Quebec, the national unity debates and promotions that followed and that led up to the referendum on "sovereignty association" in Quebec, and even, though the ceremony lacked much "drama," the "patriation" of the Canadian constitution in 1982.

The connection between the histories and the plays varies. Some plays appear to have been inspired by the academic and popular writing and research. For example, Theatre Passe Muraille's Doukhobors (first performed 1971) appears three years after The Doukhobors (1968), in which George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic "drew uncomfortable parallels between the treatment of this group by Canada and by tsarist authorities in Russia" (Berger 308), the same parallels the play develops in part. Sometimes plays coincide with research into or publication of histories on the same or related topics. For example, Sharon Pollock's The Komagata Maru Incident (1976) coincided with publication of Ted Ferguson's A White Man's Country: An Exercise in Canadian Prejudice, on the same incident. There are even cases where the plays precede major books, though not necessarily historical or popular interest, or minor publication or passing mention in other works. Ken Mitchell's The Politician (1978), based on the career of

Nicholas Flood Davin, appears two years before C.B. Koester's Mr. Davin M.P.; however, the two were aware of each other's work, and were in touch with each other at the time. Koester eventually wrote the introduction to NeWest Press's first published version of The Politican, in 1979. Coincidentally, Davin was also mentioned briefly in George Woodcock's Faces From History (1978), but the entry runs to only one page. Finally, Redlight Theatre's What Glorious Times They Had (1974), based on the career of Nellie McClung, appears five years before Candace Savage's Our Nell: A Scrapbook Biography of Nellie L. McClung. However, director Diane Grant had first become interested in McClung when the Post Office issued a commemorative stamp honouring the suffragist on the hundredth anniversary of her birth (Grant, "Nellie McClung and the Red Light Theatre" 16). These latter examples suggest that the histories, especially popular histories, and the history plays may respond to a common audience interest, and grow from a common interest, rather than depend on each other.

The widespread popular interest in the past, whatever its sources, is part of a dynamic period of growth and change in the study and writing of Canadian history. Berger identifies the outstanding features of Canadian historiography since the mid-1960s as

> a sudden acceleration of research and publication, broadening of the scope and subject matter of

> history, and destruction of interpretations that had once given meaning to Canadian experience as a whole. (259)

This vigorously expanding and radically shifting sense of what Canada was and where it had come from was a matter for academic pursuit, a topic of numerous "popular" histories, as well as a frequent source of subject for exploration by playwrights and theatre collectives. Berger deals with the academic and popular study of prose history only. However, his analysis of the prose history written by the more "serious" practitioners, the reasons for the rise in interest and the underlying attitudes behind the changes in focus and emphasis all reflect the atmosphere within which the playwrights, theatres and their potential audiences conceived of and received Canadian history, and as such help explain some of the general background to Canadian historical playwriting in the same period.

The first parallel appears in the respective preferences for subject matter, particularly in the kinds of individuals and events singled out as "worthy" subjects. The dramatizing of exemplary acts or lives has a tradition going back at least a century in Canada, and much longer elsewhere.[4] Canadian historical playwrights differ little in intent from Renaissance playwrights in a belief that the past must "be studied for the light which [it] might throw upon the problems of the present and thus serve as a guide to political behaviour" (Ribner 18). Didactic historical drama in Canada has long been popular with writers, at least, especially when it can be coupled with the retrieval and restoration to public consciousness of a "forgotten" or "neglected" figure. In 1887, for example, Sarah Curzon explains in her Preface to Laura Secord, The Heroine of 1812 (1876): "The drama of 'Laura Secord' was written to rescue from oblivion the name of a brave woman, and set it in its proper place among the heroes of Canadian history" (94). Similarly, in 1980, Ken Mitchell explains of Davin (1978) and of his choice of Nicholas Flood Davin, the Regina newspaper publisher who became the first Member of Parliament for the North-West Territories in 1887 (the very year Curzon was celebrating the "forgotten" Secord):

> [H]e was a forgotten historical character . . . [who] wasn't part of the iconography of local history, let alone Saskatchewan or Canadian history.
>
> . . . It was very exciting for me to bring these characters [Davin and his lover, the equally forgotten poet and feminist Kate Simpson] back into popular focus again and to reveal that Regina had once had such interesting characters in its midst.
>
> (Wallace and Zimmerman, eds., The Work 146).

However, as Mitchell's emphasis on Regina suggests, while the instinct or objective to rescue the "neglected life" appears consistent, the frame of reference or sphere of influence of that life undergoes a significant shift.

Like the historians Berger analyzes, playwrights of the modern period favour dramatization or analysis of experiences of smaller interest groups or populations within the Canadian whole. As Berger emphasises: "The severing of nationalism and history . . . was one of the most significant developments of this period" (259-260). Earlier generations of historians "had once concentrated upon explaining how a national community had come into being," understanding "that their subject was Canada as a nation state and that history was supremely important in promoting a community's self-understanding and definition" (260). Yet while many, perhaps most, of the playwrights and theatres creating historical plays after the mid 1960s are part of a wave of cultural nationalism that sought to decolonialize Canadian playwriting and production, few plays centre on "national" political leaders or "national" heroes, or seek to personify or represent "the nation" directly through their central character or the sweep of the action. Allan Stratton offers a comically egotistical Mackenzie King in Rexy! (1981), a prime minister struggling to maintain and further Canada's political independence while scratching for international recognition and stature among the major Allied powers of the Second World War, while John Gray creates in

Billy Bishop Goes to War (1978) a hero who struggles to survive in someone else's war, in the service of an Empire that does not particularly appreciate who he is so much as what he can do for it. Bishop's success in surviving on his own terms and earning recognition in a small way represents Canada's coming of age in the First World War. King and Bishop have some company, but not much, in "national" figures who are the focus of less well known plays, such as the Thomas D'arcy McGee of Sandra Dempsey's D'Arcy (1979).

"Worthy" individuals and events for history and history play alike, as Mitchell's words above indicate, represent a different kind of experience, and a different sense of what and who matters. Berger quotes the Australian historian Graeme Davidson whose observations of the Australian situation, Berger claims, also apply "up to a point" to the Canadian:

> Historians . . . no longer see themselves as the interpreters of national character or purpose. If they champion a cause it is more likely to be that of a class, a party, an ethnic or racial group, a locality or a gender than that of a nation as a whole. (259)

The numerous plays that concentrate on working class actions, particularly strikes, on identifiable minorities and immigrant experiences, on the activities of suffragists, and on local, provincial or "regional" events, clearly reflect a similar shift in focus on the part of the playwrights. Some plays effectively combine two or more of these "special interest groups"--immigrants are often also the working class, as in Black Powder: Estevan 1931, for example, and the Blackfeet of The Great Wave of Civilization are the exploited "consumers" in a play that is as much about the evils of capitalism as about the native experience of first contact.

This concentration on the experiences of smaller groups within the whole does not mean that "nationalism" or the idea or frame of Canada as a whole entirely or even largely disappears from Canadian historical plays in recent theatre. However, the Canada that does appear is not the ideal place it once was. While many plays examine the unique experience of a group as such, looking for definitive patterns or characteristic actions or reactions within that frame, there are plays, such as James Reaney's Donnelly trilogy, that attempt to cast the experience of the smaller as a metonymy for that of the larger. Furthermore, even within those plays that seek to treat the history of an ethnic group or a region as a viable subject in itself, we can often find the "nation" lurking in the background, surprisingly often as a threat, as a limiting, homogenizing, centralizing, imperialistic factor in the development of the smaller population, as is the case in "regional" plays such as The Politician, or in "race" plays such as Walsh. The nation is only one of several such threatening, limiting, centralizing powers, however, taking its place beside such other "menaces" as big business (the Winnipeg Grain Exchange in Paper Wheat), organized professional associations (doctors in Medicare!), white Europeans and their descendants (in virtually any of the plays based on racial experience, or, surprisingly, Ken Mitchell's The Shipbuilder), conservative, patriarchal politicians, or other political organizations that look out for their own interests ahead of the public (or "people's") interests.

However, the rather negative image of Canada implicit or explicit in modern historical plays is of special note because it stands in marked contrast to images of Canada found in other plays that reflect attitudes and interests of two earlier periods and styles of "nationalist" Canadian histories, one pre-World War I, the other post-World War I, as described and typified by K. W. McNaught. Before the first world war, McNaught notes, Canadian historians took as their "central themes. . . imperial unity and the struggles to keep Canada British in the face of American manifest destiny" (558). Tecumseh and Laura Secord, the Heroine of 1812, both set during the War of 1812, show how the smaller, militarily weaker Canada, by being true to its British heritage, withstands the aggression of the larger, land-hungry United States. Other plays, such as Catharine Nina Merritt's When George the Third Was King (1888), set during the American Revolution, also promote Loyalist ideals. Merritt even goes so far as to add the initialism U.E.L. (United Empire Loyalist) to her writing credit.

"Imperial unity" before 1918 was often expressed or pursued in the form of "Canadian Imperialism," a political movement best described by Carl Berger in The Sense of Power (1970). This movement sought to place an independent Canada on an equal footing with the mother country within a politically and economically unified empire. Mair, a founding member of the Canada First movement, which among other objectives encouraged the incorporation of the North-West into Canada, as a way to prevent American expansion into the regions, puts both interests into Tecumseh. The play includes passages extolling the beauties and riches of the regions to the west, and warning against historical incidents of American land-grabbing. Mair had been an agitator in Red River before and at the time of the rebellion in 1869, had been held prisoner by Riel for a time, and had in 1885 failed in an attempt to join the forces fighting Riel's second rebellion. Yet, apparently, he saw no irony in his writing a play against expansionism at the cost of native populations and their property rights, as long as the expansionism and greed spoke with a coarse Yankee accent. Mair also makes General Brock his apostle for Canadian imperialism, putting into Brock's mouth what amounts to an imperialist creed, echoing the tone and even the language of the Apostle's Creed from the Anglican prayer book:

> For I believe in Britain's Empire, and
> In Canada, its true and loyal son,
> Who yet shall rise to greatness, and shall stand
> At England's shoulder helping her to guard
> True liberty throughout a faithless world. (72-73)

The imperial connection and British ideal emerge even more forcefully in Merritt's play. Elizabeth Fordyce emotes a lengthy paean to the "good old flag" that "doth speak a language of its own that every nation understands; its speaks of peace, mercy, and of justice wrought to suffering men" (181). Elizabeth's speech goes on to a vision of a happy, prosperous future, of a Canada materially transformed, yet still a place where

> Within an open space I see a staff, and on it floats the Union Jack. And now the people gather round its base, and there with clasped hands, as if in prayer, they cry with one great voice, "God bless the noble men who sacrificed their wealth, their homes, their friends, their all, to save the good old flag, and plant it safe upon Canadian soil, where underneath its folds we may enjoy justice and liberty and peace.[5]

These plays do not just define a desirable society, however; they also define the qualities necessary to bring about such a society. This, after all, is one of the ends in designating "heroes." In Laura Secord, Curzon includes a lengthy scene, reminiscent at times of the "St. Crispian's Day" speech from Shakespeare's Henry V, with its talk of glory in taking on a larger, stronger foe, in which Canadian troops and their officers discuss the qualities of heroism, just before Laura arrives in their midst, displaying several of these qualities. Their models, British for the most part, and male, include Nelson, for his bravery, his reputed concern for the poor, and his willingness to literally turn a blind eye to danger. Nelson is also one of several physically small but courageous men they name, before moving on to their own leader, Brock, a tall man of "Saxon mould" (129), whose bravery also links with his "purity, and great unselfish heart" (129). The effect of this is to humanize heroism, and make it a set of qualities not dependent on physical strength or stature, or on some unattainable, "superhuman" quality of the type Northrop Frye associates with the "romantic" mode (Frye, Anatomy of Criticism 33). Rather, Curzon works within the "high" and "low" mimetic modes, and avoids the "ironic" in developing the qualities of Laura's act. The men of Laura Secord seem to put their leaders on a "higher" plane than themselves. That is, they think of Brock and Nelson in "high mimetic" terms, as superior in degree to themselves, but not to the natural environment (33-34). Fitzgibbon is somewhat in this mode as well; in his gallant address to and about Laura, he displays "passions, and powers of expression" (34) greater, at least, than his own men's, who speak in a coarser dialect. Laura, on the other hand, comes from the "low mimetic" mode. She is "one of us", someone not blessed with superior physical strength or stature, or social position. Rather, when the audience, and the soldiers who are a form of chorus here, respond to her bravery, they are asked to respond out of a sense of her "common humanity" (34).

Curzon is careful, moreover, not to allow Laura to be an overachieving "mere woman," someone physically weaker or socially inferior displaying qualities unexpected in the circumstances. Her physical bravery is clearly indicated to be equal to that of the men, and she is a member of the agricultural class that is the heart (or "middle") of her society. Curzon thus avoids slipping into the "ironic" mode, where the hero is someone "inferior" to the audience, so they have a sense of "looking down" on the action or the "actor." Fitzgibbon, in celebrating her courage and holding it up as a model for his men to follow, avoids a "not bad for a woman" speech, even as he admonishes his men ever more to respect women in Laura's memory:

> Men, never forget this woman's noble deed.
> Armed, and in company, inspirited
> By crash of martial music, soldiers march
> To duty; but she, alone, defenceless,

> With no support but kind humanity
> And burning patriotism, ran all our risks
> Of hurt, and bloody death, to serve us men,
> Strangers to her save by quick war-time ties.
> Therefore, in grateful memory and kind return,
> Ever treat women well. (136-37)

Curzon here enlists Fitzgibbon in her own plan to set Laura Secord "on such a pedestal of equality; to inspire other hearts with loyal bravery such as hers; [and] to write her name on the roll of Canadian heroes" (95). Both men and women are enabled to celebrate Laura's heroism as within their own scope of ability, even of responsibility.

There is another principle at work in Laura Secord, one which Heather Jones identifies as feminist. It emerges in Curzon's insistence on Laura's essential peacefulness, and in the relatively bloodless victory that results (10): "To save from the sword is surely as great a deed as to save with the sword; and this Laura Secord did, at an expense of nerve and muscle fully equal to any that are recorded of the warrior" (Curzon, "Preface" 95). This may be so, but the relative peacefulness and bloodlessness of Laura Secord also suggest that attitudes McNaught associates with a later period were already emerging almost half a century earlier.

After 1918, McNaught explains, historians seemed to devote themselves to convincing Canadians "of the validity of two major myths" :

> The first myth is that Canada has enjoyed a steady, peaceful, constitutional evolution, as opposed to the violent, revolutionary and entirely undesirable development of Europe and the United States. . . . The second myth, proceeding logically enough from the first, is that Canada's greatest glory has been her ability to compromise. . . . The conclusion is that statesmanship in Canada, even more than elsewhere, must be displayed primarily in the ability to balance pressures--regional and racial, religious and economic. (558)

Typical of historical writing of the latter sort is this analysis by Edgar McInnis of the "essential drama" of Canadian history, which

> does not lie in armed struggles in which the nation's destiny is at stake, or in political conflicts in which irreconcilable and contending forces press their quarrel to a decisive issue. It lies rather in the slow and tenacious advance from one step to another along the road. (vii)

McInnis's definition of "drama" and the dramatic differs substantially from that of modern Canadian playwrights.

The slow and tenacious advance is occasionally the stuff of pageants, and is most evident in _A Pageant of Canadian History_ (1938), written for schools by J. B.

Callan, T. C. Mulvihill and E. C. Scully. This pageant seeks to trace the "development of Colonial Canada from a trading post to a world power" ([4]). Like other pageants (Thomas Chisholm's Dialogues on Canadian History 1916, for example, which ends Canadian history with Confederation), A Pageant of Canadian History tries to depict Canada as a "finished" reality. In this case, a history that begins with an "Indian scene," accompanied ludicrously by the popular song "Indian Love Call." From this rather unpromising start, it proceeds through highlights of French (Act I) and English (Act II) rule (including in the latter case the apparently obligatory Loyalist praise for the flag), dwells on the pre-Confederation conferences to explain, among other things, the division of federal and provincial powers as a means to avoid the American "mistakes." Canadian history "ends" in this pageant with Britain consulting Canada on the 1936 constitutional crisis over the abdication of Edward VIII. Canada, it concludes, "no longer bows in homage, but proudly gives her counsel tempered by experience and inspired by love for her mother country" (31). Just what that advice was, or whether it was acted upon, and to what effect, are matters left out of this celebration of Canadian political adulthood.

Not all pageants present this "finished" vision. Minnie Harvey Williams' The Romance of Canada: An Historical Pageant (1923), explains Salem Goldworth Bland in the introduction, seeks to promote "unity and a high national ideal," and to steer the country away from becoming a "mere echo and annex of the United States" (3). Williams' vision of the "nobler Canada to be" (3) goes beyond reminding Canadians of the "ideals they have inherited from a heroic and romantic past" (4). She includes scenes such as the one where the Goddess Fame speaks of a fairer Canada of the future: a well-made garden where even the "waste places are re-forested," and in which the resources of Canada are developed for the benefit of the many, rather than the profit of the few. Ironically, Williams finds her democratic ideal in Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Although she still promotes peaceful national development and uses a British standard of measurement--Britannia enters in the end to name and crown the "pioneer Mother" as the ideal "most worthy to receive the homage of all Canadians"--many of her political and social ideals, and her sense of Canada as having to refashion (re-forest) itself, and to undo some of the damage done in its past, would fit comfortably into the political and social rhetoric of the Canadian theatre of fifty years later. So would some of her scenes and theatrical techniques: Alan Filewod has noted that her scene depicting the arrival of new settlers at the Winnipeg train station is similar to the opening sequence of the second version of 25th Street Theatre's Paper Wheat (1977) (Filewod, Collective Encounters 100).

Promoting an ideal of a "peaceful" development, and plotting the "drama" of the statesmanship of responsible compromise calls for some ingenuity. This is evident in Nathaniel Benson's The Paths of Glory (1927), a much different treatment than Mair's or Curzon's of such (theoretically untypical) events as the War of 1812, and of the gallant Canadians who (reluctantly) fought it. Brock is no longer a willing warrior for Loyalist causes. Indeed, he is no longer an anglophile at all. While he does his military duty, he affirms his faith in a more peaceful process, claiming that "what the administrators of a colony do in time of peace makes a country, does more for a country's strength than twenty wars" (28-29). Brock seems more concerned with the ongoing political situation in Canada as a whole than with the immediate military situation in the Niagara peninsula. On the eve of the battle for Queenston Heights, he tries to defuse some of the mutual suspicion between French and English speaking segments of his army, and in particular tries to educate his bigoted second-in-command, Col. Sheaffe, about the nature of Canada. Benson seems to speak, through Brock, to the "Sheaffes" in his own audience when Brock reminds Sheaffe that "Canada is not a country made up entirely of Englishmen and descendants of Englishmen. There are French and Indians" (35). Brock becomes a hero, not as a military figure, but as a mediator, a model compromiser, someone who prefers (and, supposedly historically preferred) peaceful co-existence and orderly development to violent confrontation. The differences between Curzon's Brock (whom we never actually see on stage) and Benson's reflects different historical principles. Yet both work within what is essentially a "high mimetic" frame, in that both are leaders, if leaders admired for different qualities.

The image of Canada as a peaceful, fair-minded nation whose problems were all solved years ago is one of the more frequent targets of historians and historical playwrights in the period after the mid 1960s. This attack is part of another characteristic of the period shared by historians and playwrights, "an intense questioning of the direction in which the country was moving" (Berger, The Writing of Canadian History 263). Berger lists as indications of an underlying hopefulness and agitation for change,

> the loosening of the hold of older British-Canadian norms, the feminist movement, the native peoples' rejection of their 'colonial' position in Canadian society, and, above all, student activism" which was most evident "among the supporters of the 'New Left' in the universities." (264)

The "New Left," he continues, was more a "mood" than a movement, a mood most consistently displayed as a hostility "to hierarchy and authority (including interpretations of history that seemed to justify the flawed present)" (264). All the groups and moods Berger refers to are reform-minded, if not overtly revolutionary, and, he continues,

> Reform movements which seek to change the future have always tried to rewrite the past. . . . The new history . . . involved more than the sympathetic study of previously neglected groups, but it owed not a little of its critical spirit to contemporary reform movements that were questioning institutions and practices. For some, history became a force for remedial action and moral criticism, a weapon for attacking the abuses of the present by exposing their sources and pointing to better alternatives not taken in the past. (264, 265)

This last sentence defines the essential approach and philosophy of numerous Canadian playwrights who after 1965 followed in the footsteps of historical dramatists from the Renaissance on in adapting "drama to the purposes of history" (Ribner 29).[6] For example, the statement echoes the sentiments of Sharon Pollock, Michael Cook, Wendy Lill and Rick Salutin, to name some of the more prominent who saw their Canada as somehow fundamentally flawed and in need of remedy if the future were not to continue the problems of the present. In the introduction to the Playwrights Canada publication of The Komagata Maru Incident (1976), Pollock claims: "Until we recognize our past, we cannot change our future" (1978, np), a thought echoed by Cook: "The only way you learn to go into the future is to recognize everything that existed before" (Wallace and Zimmerman 163). Lill, who discovered in her research for The Fighting Days (1983) that the suffragists had been talking of the same kinds of things as Lill's own contemporaries, declared: "If you want to understand what's going on in your society, you have to look back. . . . It becomes clear why things are the way they are. You get a perspective" (Nick Mitchell 19).

Salutin, however, is the most acerbic of all, slamming the "perniciously false" impression of Canadian history as it had been taught in the past, a history that

> read like the biography of a well-born son [who] went from strength to strength, marked by two outstanding successes: the success of the binational experiment and the successful passage from Colony to Nation. ("Great Canadian History Robbery" 27)

The result, Salutin continues, has been to leave the impression that "all our problems were resolved 'peaceably' long ago," so that we no longer get excited and "don't fight back against things as they have always been" (58). In a related article, Salutin declared a manifesto for historians, without distinguishing between those who write history professionally and those who write from it for the stage:

> What's important is the purpose [historians] share: to find in Canada's past the roots of problems we face today, and evidence of strengths we may use to shape our future. ("W. L. MacKenzie: He spoke for Canada" 58)

Salutin's attitude is also most obviously an expression of a "New Left" mood Berger identifies as being behind a call for histories that would give "greater recognition" to groups formerly allocated "subordinate positions in society" (264). While not all playwrights or theatres can be labelled with this ideology to the extent Salutin could be (and has been), he is obviously not alone among playwrights in his stance or his interests.

The preoccupation with routes not taken in the past that we hear in Salutin's "evidence of strengths" and his ongoing search for "missing history of resistance" ("Great Canadian History Robbery" 58) is one of the dominant themes of historical plays of the modern period, and represents a marked departure from earlier plays. Merritt's prophetic scene, above, and similar scenes or statements on other plays, such as John Hunter-Duvar's De Roberval (1888) point to a "future" that is the audience's "present." The audience can bask in the flattering implied portrayal of themselves as the realization of the hopes of the past. For a large number of modern playwrights, the past remains "unfinished business." We can see this in prophetic statements such as the one that ends Salutin's 1837: The Farmer's Revolt, a piece created in collaboration with an actors' collective at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille from 1972-74. In the final scene, the rebels Matthews and Lount go to their deaths on the gallows. As Matthews laughs bitterly "Sam, we lost--," Lount replies in the stoutest of Leftist terms, "No! We haven't won yet" (264). By extension, since many of the ideals they fought for, or supposedly fought for according to Salutin and the vision of events developed in this play, remain unmet, the modern audience has also failed to measure up to the ideals of political and cultural freedom Matthews and Lount fought for, they and we have still not yet won. While plays like 1837 seek to identify and celebrate "strengths," they resist the sense of historical and social closure common in earlier Canadian historical plays.

The plays of the 1960s and 70s are not the first to develop this alternative view of Canada as something other than admirable. John Coulter's Riel plays appear to be the first major works to raise the spectre of Canada as the imperialistic trampler of the rights of a smaller "nation," the Metis people of the North-West. In his "Forward" [sic] to the second of the Riel plays, The Crime of Louis Riel (1966), Coulter explains that he sees the

> Metis leader and the rebellions which he led as

> precursors of later and present uprisings all over the world, particularly the so-called Third World --armed resistance by small nations against forcible take-over by some powerful neighbour.. . ." (n.p.)

The Riel plays anticipate Salutin's search for a missing history of resistance, and in the prophetic passages of the trial scenes, we hear something of the rhetoric of the "unfinished business of the past":

> I am their leader--and one day perhaps I will be acknowledged as a leader of good in this great new country. There will at last be a New World. Here. In this North America. But not in some days or years. It may take hundreds of years. Yet now, we make a beginning. (Crime of Louis Riel 54)

Riel was first performed in 1950 at the New Play Society, to general critical acclaim. However, for a variety of reasons, including the sizeable demands it made on a theatre to provide a large enough cast and a large enough stage upon which to perform it, Riel was not revived until a production at the National Arts Centre in 1975, when it and its companion pieces found a more favourable theatrical milieu and, arguably, a more receptive social atmosphere. It was also not long to remain essentially alone in its analysis of Canadian history, but would become one among what were soon to be many plays of the type.

While addressing, defining and dramatizing such unfinished business of the past is an educational and rhetorical objective of many of the "reform-minded" playwrights and groups of the modern period, it is not the only one. Paul Thompson identifies another important objective common among historical plays of the period in a 1982 interview where he talks of the theatre's contribution to an ongoing process of reappropriating history and making it "ours." Thompson's position is that Canadian history has not been "written" because it is not what he calls "current language" (Wallace and Zimmerman 241), by which he appears to mean part of a system of cultural and social discourse, part of a mythology that Canadians use to inform their conduct and debate. This seems a surprising claim in the face of Berger's description of the explosion in historical research and publication at all levels. However, Thompson explains, in Canada "we are still trying to fashion those events [from our past]" (241), and it is part of theatre's "basic responsibility" as a "current" art to help with that essential fashioning. In effect, to expand Thompson's metaphor, theatre must help "remint" historical fact--the raw material--into some useful and acceptable form of "cultural currency," some medium of cultural exchange. Such myths can serve either to celebrate achievement, by creating a mythology of completion or success, or to create the necessary foundation for change by providing a mythology of transformation and ongoing action, or "resistance."

Thompson is not alone in seeing a connection between history, theatre, and the search for and shaping of essential Canadian myth. James Reaney, writing about his epic Donnelly trilogy makes a similar point: "Maybe if we get used to seeing our society as being based on a story, we'll wake up and realize we can get a better story" ("A Letter From James Reaney" 4). He then writes of myth using the analogy of an Eskimo mask "that controls all the other masks", and explains that his theatre is after this same sort of controlling mask, which he theorizes is "the idea of pure STORY" (5). What this involves, he continues, is the finding of the appropriate "STORY STYLE," although in the case of historical plays the story and style are not always an easy match. In the case of his Donnelly plays, for example,

> pure story gets displaced somewhat by all the history we have to deal with; with our sensational and primitive (so-called) techniques we are holding a shaping mirror up to the thorn thicket that was Biddulph in the past" (5).

What an audience sees is not the history, but history's reflection, the sequencing of selected events and the characterizations it offers of the participants, transformed into the stuff of "pure STORY."

According to Neil Carson, the search for and shaping of myth has been a pervasive, informing factor in Canadian historical playwriting for most of the last century. This ongoing dramatic "research and development" project has been problematic, however. What has always marked Canadian historical plays, Carson claims, is "a mood of questioning and inconclusiveness" that "suggests that Canadian playwrights are searching, sometimes unconsciously, for significance and form in our past," a search for form that has often led them to "impose traditional fictional patterns inherited from the Old World on Canadian events" (213).

The question of form is a recurrent issue in the study of historical playwriting not just in contemporary Canada, as the quotations above indicate, but in historical playwriting in general. In historical drama lives and events are continually being refitted according to the dictates of drama and the playwright's dramatic and didactic purposes. Indeed, says Matthew Wikander, "The unruliness, the intractability of the past, the impossibility of writing historical drama without Idea, shaped plot, or topicality is its fascination" (236). If a historical play "succeeds " or "fails," in Canada or elsewhere, it is not because the history was right or wrong, but because the play either has or does not have adequate internal, essential artistic coherence and verisimilitude, which are more important, evidently, than factual accuracy. Coleridge declares this when he warns:

> In the composition, care must be taken that there appear no _dramatic_ improbability. . . . The events themselves are immaterial, otherwise than as the clothing and manifestation of the spirit that is working within" (117, emphasis added).[7]

Lindenberger goes so far as to claim that the "dramatic convention within which the author works is even more fundamental than either character or issues in shaping his material" (17). Finding and skilfully employing the appropriate form or mode to embody and translate the history into a cultural artifact, to remint it into currency, rather than finding or recognizing the appropriate subject, seems to be at bottom the critical factor in historical playwriting.

Form also implies something about the content, or the writer's attitude towards the content, and the two, content and form, work together to create a impression on the audience. Carson is perhaps too negative towards the "imposed" Old World patterns and too anxious to find "unique" Canadian experiences and dramatic forms. When a Canadian playwright uses a martyr play pattern, for example, to depict the life of a Louis Riel, of a Bishop Charbonneau, or of a fictitious, composite seventeenth-century "blackrobe" at work among the Hurons, that playwright is not necessarily only attempting to shape that life according to an "old" pattern, even an "eternal" pattern, but is, arguably, also trying to suggest that the qualities that such a traditional pattern evokes and celebrates are as present in Canada as elsewhere. The use of traditional representational dramatic forms such as tragedy or comedy is not necessarily a misguided and foredoomed attempt to "reduce" Canadian realities or to force them into unnatural, "imported" shapes (even if such are sometimes the effects), but may also be a valid attempt to recognize and acknowledge the existence and survival of traditional or "universal" behaviours and values in a new environment. The numerous "Canadian" historical plays adopting such traditional forms, just as historical plays anywhere at any time, succeed or fail as much according to how well the form is used as according to where the form came from originally.

Finally, if "Old World" forms are inappropriate to Canada, the majority of historical plays from the mid 1960s onward can only be seen as a "formal" failure. The attack on the old myths, the related determination to find an exciting, eventful history of conflict, and the attempt to set the groundwork for a "better" Canada of the future, frequently result in plays that adopt the rhetorical form, though not always the flamboyant theatrical style, of melodrama. Melodrama shapes conflict into win-lose clashes between polarized opposites, based on a fundamental sense of right and wrong, good and evil, virtuous and villainous, or, more relatively, better and worse. It is an uncompromising mode, in that "it can offer no terminal reconciliation. . . . There is, rather, a social order to be purged, a set of ethical imperatives to be made clear" (Brooks 17), and what counts in melodrama above all else seems to be "the clarification and recognition of the signs in conflict" (Brooks 203). Such a mode clearly suits the purposes of Canadian playwrights whose target is Canada's mythical peaceful nature and "genius for compromise."

The melodramatic mode or shape appears both in dramas proper, that is plays that use dramatic conventions to fictionalize the historical moment or lives, and in plays in the documentary mode and style, that claim factual authenticity based on faithfulness to their source material. The dramas and documentaries (or docudramas, as they have often been called) take this melodramatic master shape and tone because their common underlying intent is "reform," or the finding and or shaping of a "better" story for a "better" Canada. That is, they tend towards the melodramatic because their primary didactic interest is moralistic rather than historiographic. Melodrama suits the moralistic purpose because it is a prescriptive mode that problematizes issues in moral terms. It is, therefore, a natural mode as well for the "problem" play, which many Canadian historical plays tend also to be. In such plays,

> the melodramatic spirit performs a historical task

> of taking sides and stirring up debate on most issues of behaviour. In literature, melodrama is the principal vehicle of protest and dissent; or, more accurately, it is the vehicle of protestants and dissenters when they are in a polemic rather than a soul-searching mood. (Heilman 96-7)[8]

Because melodrama divides the contending forces into the virtuous and the villainous, it tends to unify the audience through a sense of pity for the victims or the victimized, who are also shown to represent the side of virtue, and to arouse anger and point the finger of accusation against the victimizers, the villains (Heilman 298).

There is evident irony in this prevalence of the melodramatic mode in the Canadian historical play. Not only is it a "received" mode, but it is virtually a necessary mode of the "cultural nationalists" and their fundamental desire to reform and redefine the country. More ironically, it tends to correspond to the objectives and preferred style of several of the "alternative" and alternative-minded writers and theatres, who created most of the historical plays after the mid-1960s. Such writers and theatres sought to promote Canadian content and create distinctive Canadian forms. As such they often shunned the dramatic forms and instead experimented with documentary forms. Yet, since historically documentary grows out of political theatre and seeks to promote an ideology, is also a mode that tends to "clarify" issues in moralistic terms, or, at least, in polarized terms that often take on moralistic overtones, the tones of melodrama.

Documentary, Brechtian epic theatre and, at times, political agitprop, have all exerted a strong attraction for the alternative theatre movement in the way their presentational performance styles repudiate the "traditional" standards of the well-made play, with its insistence on a seamless plot, internally motivated characters and the dramatic illusion of reality, or at least the principle of mimesis. They are also formally suited to a rhetoric of change or impermanence, of discontinuity. Collective creation, which in Canada has strong links with the documentary, or the documentary style, similarly, repudiates the "hierarchical" processes of playwriting and production of the "established" theatre. There is a further irony in the frequent advocacy of the documentary as a suitable original Canadian alternative. Many of the documentary and collective techniques and theories espoused in Canada were themselves imported at least in part from Europe or the United States. Documentary theatre originated in Germany after World War I, particularly in the work of Erwin Piscator, and has been a recurring feature of twentieth-century theatre ever since, in Europe, where it became popular again after World War II, especially in Germany, and in the United States, where it was used prominently by the Federal Theatre Project "Living Newspaper" productions of the 1930s, and as part of an "alternative" radical theatre movement of the 1960s.

Frequently, in Canada as elsewhere, the ideals and practices of collective creation and the documentary have found themselves entangled in an ideological debate that itself sounds rather melodramatic. This debate tends to polarize into a "drama/documentary" confrontation that places the two in opposition as if the two were not only different in form and technique but in merit. The Canadian "drama/documentary" conflict emerged as part of the rhetorical "overdetermination" that, Alan Filewod argues, "identified alternative aesthetics with alternative politics" in the early 1970s ("Erasing Historical Difference" 206). The two forms become, in effect, another example of the sort of "realistic/anti-realistic" polarity Richard Hornby writes of. Such a pattern, Hornby explains, is "fundamental to all human thought . . . . because it is the simplest and most effective means of processing information" (13). A problem arises, however, when we sometimes fail to recognize such binary systems as "abstract fabrications" (13), and treat them "not as human constructions applied to reality, but rather as attributes of reality itself" (13). The further danger is that we begin to equate the poles of other binary oppositions as somehow parallel, arriving at value judgements that may not be at all appropriate. "Drama" and "documentary," or the associated "single playwright" and "creative collective" do not necessarily parallel "bad and good," "irresponsible and responsible," or "ineffective and effective" respectively. Sometimes, however, their Canadian practitioners--like Chris Brookes of the Mummers Troups of Newfoundland, who pursued the collective documentary alternative as part of his declaration of cultural independence from foreign (especially British) influence--have tried to imply such equations as part of an "old world/new world," "colonialized/post-colonial," mainstream/alternative" aesthetic and cultural dialectic. The presence of the common melodramatic rhetorical form, at least in the Canadian historical play, largely undermines the essentially moralistic stances in any such polarized debate over the "best" form for Canadian plays.

In theory at least, documentary should be immune to identification with a dramatic or aesthetic mode such as the melodramatic. It is, in theory, a "theatre of reportage" (Weiss 41), with claims to let the facts found in a variety of sources speak for themselves, to present them for examination (Weiss 42), and to let the audience analyze them for meaning. That is, documentary "presents and re-enacts records from history" (Mason 263); it stages facts as facts, and insists upon and authenticates their factuality on stage, in performance. According to Peter Cheeseman, one of its prominent practitioners whose work and theories influenced many Canadian directors, most prominently Ken Kramer of Regina's Globe Theatre, documentary is an "inevitable part of our twentieth-century scientific enthusiasm for a popular relationship with facts, and a kind of intolerance and suspicion for the products of the imagination" (Cheeseman, The Knotty, "Introduction" vii).

Karl Kraus enunciates the principle of reportage when he says of the text of The Last Days of Mankind (1918)

> The most improbable deeds reported here really happened. The most improbable conversations that are carried out here were spoken word for word. The most glaring inventions are quotations. (3)

A similar, characteristic "conscientious adherence to the letter of the material was, to a much higher degree than before, regarded as a sine qua non" among documentaries of the 1960s in both Europe and the U.S. (Zilliacus 224).

However, although "true documentary avoids the appearance at least of overt subjectivity as well as conspicuous invention" (Bessai, "Documentary Theatre in Canada" 12), it does not attain, or necessarily attempt, anything like "journalistic" objectivity in its "reportage." It is at the same time, insists Weiss, a theatre that "takes sides" (42), a theatre of advocacy, and its strength "lies in its ability to shape a useful pattern from fragments of reality, to build a model of actual occurrences" (42).

Clearly, while they differ in their material and means, ultimately, in documentry as in drama content and form work together as part of the same discourse, providing "meaning" and seeking rhetorical impact on an audience. And with amazing frequency, in spite of the "factuality" and "authenticity" of the words and actions that form that essential shape that allows the facts to "take sides," the model that documentary builds is a melodramatic model.

Documentary, after all, achieves its ends through the selection and arrangements of the documents, and through the style of presentation and performance. Much of that shaping seeks to break away from the dramatic "illusion of reality" in a variety of ways. Typically, thematically linked short scenes replace the traditional plot-line that builds through scenes and acts. Weiss describes the effect of "Reports, and parts of reports, divided rhythmically into carefully times sections":

> The scenario consists of antithetic pieces, of sequences of similar examples, of contrasting forms, of changing values. Variations on a theme. Raising the pitch. Moving to a climax. Interruptions, dissonances. (43)

Interruption disrupts not just individual documents but a sense of "story" through "shifts and displacements" of location and time through such devices as "cross-cutting of reflections, monologues, dreams, flashbacks, [and] contradictions" that cause "uncertainty" and sometimes create "a shock effect" (43).

Facts, Weiss continues, "are shaped stylistically. . . . Personalities are caricatured, situations dramatically simplified. Reports, comments, abstracts, are turned into songs." Caricature, as a satirical device, also tends to assign a negative moral value to the individual or the class caricatured. It is only one way that character-building in documentary differs from that in drama. In documentary, characters are used mainly "to illustrate or illuminate situations" (Zilliacus 248). Individual actors typically play multiple roles, and cross-casting is common, with male and female performers taking roles in either sex, according to the demands of the scene. Finally, where drama develops major characters as species of heroes and villains, or of any others from the a large array of traditional "supporting" roles and types, documentary theatre "is concerned with what is typical as opposed to mere externals, and does not deal with stage-characters and backgrounds. It is concerned with groups, with areas of influence, with tendencies" (42). Typically, it divides characters, or participants, into sides, into "winners" and "losers" (42), to expose who benefits and who is harmed by an event or by the existing order. The melodramatic mode is often clearly at work in establishing and characterizing such divisions.

Shaping to editorialize on the facts accomplishes in theatre an effect that film-maker John Grierson, who coined the word "documentary" in relation to his own field, insisted upon as essential to documentary film. Documentary involves a creative element that goes beyond actuality, beyond mere "descriptions of natural material, to arrangements, rearrangements, and creative shapings of it" through the "juxtaposition of detail [to] create an interpretation" (Hardy 182). Weiss enunciates the principles behind documentary juxtapositioning on the stage:

> Through the confrontation of contradictory details, it shows up existing conflicts. According to the underlying material, it then makes a suggestion for a solution, or an appeal, or asks basic questions. (42)

We find here the two possibilities inherent in documentary theatre that Zilliacus claims "stand against each other" often within one play, in a way that is obviously rhetorical:

> One is to depict and decipher existing miseries. The other is to outline counterworlds. . . . Nothing will prevent a playwright from trying to combine the two. Most documentarists, being meliorists almost by definition, will attempt such a mingling, overtly or by implication. (233)

The ability to expose a social problem and its roots, and to offer an alternative, makes documentary theatre an obviously attractive mode for "reform-minded" playwrights and "alternative" theatres. At the same time the capacity for depicting and deciphering, or for defining, the miseries, and melioristic instinct to shape a "better" alternative equally seem clearly to tend towards the melodramatic mode.

This evident working link, in Canada and elsewhere, between documentary and melodrama is doubly ironic because documentary theatre emerged, and has re-emerged, in periods when it has seemed that "new cultural imperatives cannot be expressed within the framework of traditional dramatic forms" (Filewod, Collective Encounters 13-14). Consider the example of the influential Peter Cheeseman, author of the theory that documentary links with a general twentieth-century suspicion of the products of the imagination. Cheeseman developed his documentary methods and use of collective creation based on research by his actors at the Victoria Theatre of Stoke-on-Trent in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in conditions mirroring those found in the 1970s in Canada (Filewod 17). Cheeseman, expressing sentiments and ideals to be echoed later in Canada, explained that his theatre wanted to "give expression to the life of the home community," and to "begin to develop a popular language, a style of our own which would make theatre livelier and more attractive that the current conventional play format" (Itzin, ed. 86), all in the absence of a professional, functioning playwright-in-residence. Furthermore, Cheeseman's practices typify the 60s insistence on literal adherence to the record:

> Words or actions deriving from the events to be described or participants in those events are the only permitted material for the scenes of the documentary. If there is no primary source material available on a particular topic, no scene can be made from it" (The Knotty, "Introduction" xiv).

Look, however, at some of the instructions Cheeseman gives his actors in a briefing that precedes their research for The Staffordshire Rebels (1965), a play based on events from the seventeenth-century English Civil War, "and its effects on the County of Staffordshire" (Itzin, ed. 86):

> If you look at the period 1620 to 1670 and say, "Where is there the shape of a show in the public events of this period?, several points emerge. There is a great fundamental tragedy in what happened to Charles I. (Itzin 88, emphasis added).

The emphasized portions suggest that the actors were already looking for evidence of a certain kind before they began research, evidence that would fit within already established guidelines that would characterize events and participants within dramatic frames of reference. Cheeseman does not seem to recognize or to see any documentary problem in submitting "reality" to the standards of "products of the imagination." Although Cheeseman sent his actors looking for a tragic shape, it seems that other collectives, without necessarily thinking in such terms, have looked for the shape of a melodrama in public events, either instinctively or perhaps as the result of ideological and political pre-programming.

Even if it had not been, as it seems to have been, a logical enough outcome of the political roots of documentary, the hybridizing of dramatic and documentary forms and aesthetics may be an inevitable characteristic of Canadian theatre. In Canada, Alan Filewod argues, the documentary forms emerge "in large part from the intersection of two distinct sources: a tradition of didactic historical drama in Canada, and the international tradition of documentary theatre . . ."(5), the two traditions described above. The writers of didactic historical drama have "invariably" taken as their "self-appointed task" the promotion of a

> specific ideology, and, in most cases, that ideology has been overtly nationalistic--even though the definitions and programs of Canadian nationalism have changed radically over the past century. (5)

The "cultural nationalism" of many of the playwrights and theatres already named, even if they focus on experiences of a more local or restricted nature than the nation as a whole, may be seen as one of the later nationalistic "programs."

Although he traces connections between Canadian and foreign documentarists, Filewod largely separates the Canadian documentary from the world-wide phenomenon, taking his own side in the "inherited forms vs indigenous forms debate." He maintains that the Canadian documentary is part of a "unique development" (19), "an inextricable part of the search for a theatre that would be both indigenous and popular" (182):

> Unlike the Piscatorian tradition of documentary, with its emphasis on polemic, the typical Canadian documentary does not examine the value of actuality as evidence. It authenticates experience rather than ideology or polemical inquiry. It is for this reason that the plays in [Collective Encounters] rely heavily on first-person monologues. The Canadian documentary has tended to be anti-ideological; it does not try to explain the significance of the matter it documents in an intellectual scheme, but rather suggests the significance of a shared historical or community experience by transforming it into art. . . . [T]he fact of that transformation is as important as the textual content of the

> performance. This preference for community affirmation over ideology suggests that the Canadian documentary is ultimately a moralistic genre. (183)

The claim that the Canadian documentary is "anti-ideological" is obviously inconsistent with his earlier identification of the ideological inheritance from the tradition of the didactic historical play, an inheritance that clearly emerges in the historical documentaries. Filewod seems to want here, later in his study, to limit the sense of "ideology" to a larger "international" scheme, particularly a "leftist" scheme, by focusing on the difference between Piscatorian and Canadian documentary. However, "community affirmation" is an ideological stance, a sentimental as well as a moral one. It maintains that value of the community and its experiences are as artistically worthwhile as those of the great international moods, movements and moods. As such, it is part of that ideological commitment of the "cultural nationalists" to produce plays written, directed and performed for Canadians by Canadians, based on Canadian events, experiences and themes. Regardless of whether one accepts Filewod's differentiation between the ideological and the moralistic intent of the Canadian documentary, a melodramatic polarization of events seems almost a required didactic technique.

Like the Canadian didactic historical drama, as Filewod demonstrates, the Canadian documentary offers Canadian audiences models of Canadian behaviour and experience to measure themselves against and to live up to, individually, locally, and nationally. In so doing, it fulfils one of Weiss's objectives, to use "known precedents" as "models" (42) from which to draw conclusions. However, in doing so, the Canadian documentary frequently departs from the standard of documentary authenticity based on "only the facts." Theatre Passe Muraille, for example, one of the most influential theatres to experiment with documentary and with collective creation, in plays like 1837: The Farmers' Revolt or in Buffalo Jump (1972), exercises a level of "creative freedom" that "often errs too much on the side of historical laxity to be properly categorized as 'documentary'" (Bessai, "Documentary Theatre" 18). Bessai follows Thompson in classifying them as "folk theatre." Thompson uses the term "folk drama," in connection with earlier Theatre Passe Muraille collective creations, to acknowledge the fact that "we were gleaning an awful lot of our material from direct verbal connections," and were "imbuing the experience with a mythical dimension" (Wallace and Zimmerman 240). While the "direct verbal connections" with the past may be lacking in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, it and Buffalo Jump have that mythical dimension that makes them more folk plays than documentaries, despite their historical foundations and prominent use of presentational methods and documentary style. Finally, as documentarists have done from the origin of the form, writers such as Rick Salutin and Carol Bolt, the writers "on" 1837: The Farmers' Revolt and Buffalo Jump respectively, use the documentary style to authenticate not the factuality of their content but their interpretation, their moralized view of what Canada might be or become.

This frequent belief that Canada, while not yet the tolerant, compromising "Peaceable Kingdom" of myth, is nonetheless a "pacifiable" realm, is often an article of faith with modern Canadian historical playwrights. Their faith links with an ideal of progress that is itself sentimentally attuned to a melodramatic rhetoric. Herbert Lindenberger, at least, seems to have melodrama in mind, if not in his vocabulary, when he writes of the matter of dramatizing "progress" and of the influence of the Hegelian/Marxist approaches with their concept of a universal "ongoing historical process which must culminate in the audience's present." (9) Such a view has enabled dramatists to

> seek out eras whose essential conflicts seemed to point forward, in fact to anticipate those later stages of the historical process with which the audience might experience some emotional identification. . . .

> Indeed, writers could seek out periods in which an older, reactionary view of life was colliding with some newer, more attractive dispensation: by identifying with the proponents of the new, the audience would not only feel it was experiencing the force of historical continuity, but could flatter itself for being on the side of progress. (9)

Such a scheme of history appears in Canadian terms in plays such as Reaney's Donnelly trilogy, where a "New World" order conflicts with an "Old World." However, as Coulter's Riel plays suggest, the "new" is not always the "better" in Canadian historical plays.

The "new" versus the "old" is only one of several common conflict patterns that simplify history to a series of moral conflicts between good and evil. More often, in fact, the essence of the melodramatic seems to root itself in terms of a "David and Goliath" myth: little against big, poor against rich, powerless against powerful, margin against the centre, coloured race against white, female against male, rural against urban, the individual against the group, or region against nation. In such a mythic configuration, the disadvantaged, the "little person," is also the virtuous. It is a myth that accords with one of the older traditional melodramatic concerns, the "villainy" that had been the tyranny of kings. However, says Robert

Heilman, that fear "is now turned on Fascists, Communists, 'Establishments,' and majorities generally":

> Whether in 'shows' that simply play for the current stock responses, or in the large body of 'problem plays' that strive to evoke questions or influence attitudes, the melodramatic form seizes on the topics that spring up with the turns of history and conscience--slavery, 'big business,' slums, totalitarianism, the mechanization of life, war, the varieties of segregationism--and, from whatever point of view it may adopt, finds the chosen issue to be the local habitation of evil. (94)

Such a pattern holds obvious attractions for a historical and dramatic perspective that concentrates on the experiences of smaller, or under-represented, populations within a larger geographical, racial, economic or political unit. For this reason, to help focus issues into smaller, more manageable units, I divide the greater body of plays into categories that reflect the preference not only of Canadian historians but evidently of Canadian historical playwrights: incidents or events that focus on the experiences of regions, women, races, and classes. In theatrical terms, a concentration on such incidents can make Canadian history appear to be a succession of battles on the part of metaphorical "little guys" for survival, recognition, or even for voices of their own. The typical Canadian historical event can be made to appear, in effect, a metaphorical parallel to Canada's struggle for a national cultural identity in a world of cultural political giants. Similarly, the typical Canadian historical event can appear as a metaphor for the struggle of the Canadian writer, director and/or actor for a place in a Canadian theatre dominated by foreigners or foreign standards.

Melodrama, moreover, is a supremely adaptable mode for confronting an audience with what can be made to seem potentially vital turning points in history, or as "events" in some ongoing narrative known as Canadian history.[9] Events in narratives, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan explains, can be of two types. They can either "advance the action by opening an alternative ('kernels')" or they can "expand, amplify, maintain or delay" the advancement or potential advancement ('catalysts' or 'satellites')" (16). That is, a kernel presents an opportunity for change, or as Seymour Chatman puts it, provides a branching point "which force[s] a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths" (53), while catalysts or satellites may be seen as those attributes that define, or expand upon and amplify, the moral potential of the kernel and its paths. If the path taken proves beneficial, follows the path of "good," the event is "progressive." Sometimes, however, while a potentially "progressive" path opens up, the "event" ends with the same power structure or "evil" force still in control. Catalysts within that kernel explain how this came about, and account for the "delay" in arriving at the "better" resolution that might have been and might yet be.

Such a dramatization and configuration of history into events is an example of what Hayden White calls "narrativized" history. In narrativized history, the conclusion of a definable event in a passage negotiated or in a passage blocked can correspond only to the passage or non-passage "from one moral order to another" (Content of the Form 23). The requirement on the part of the writers for such a sense of closure, or passage, in historical accounts is, White suggests,

> a demand . . . for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama. Has any historical narrative ever been written that was not informed not only by the moral awareness but specifically by the moral authority of the narrator? (21)

White might also have extended that question to ask, "or been accepted as valid without appealing to the moral sense of the audience?" since, while part of the narrativizing process must be the writer's/narrator's efforts to "sell" his or her particular moral authority, the success of that effort must be evaluated at least in part in terms of audience acceptance. Such an acceptance could be reflected by a reinforcement of the audience's existing understanding of events, or existing biases, or in the modification or even the reversal of pre-existing understanding or bias.

While drama is not a "narrative" in literary terms, history plays rely on a similar narrativized sense of history as a moral arena, and in dramatic and theatrical terms, the mode that concentrates attention on win-lose conflicts in the moral arena is the melodramatic. Canadian historical playwrights usually restrict the possibilities of the "event" or kernel to two--one "progressive" and one "static"--and one (usually the progressive) is clearly preferable, or presented in such a way as to seem preferable. The event is "over" either when the force for progress or the force for stasis "wins" the day. In such a melodramatic configuration, moments of transfer or passage allow the audience two possible experiences. If the event closes on a successful passage, the audience can share in a sense of achievement and completion, as the incident resolves itself as a step towards the ideal society we are today. Or, in contrast, the audience may be left with a sense of frustrated despair, as it sees a potential step forward defeated by the reactionary forces that constitute the local "evil," postponing that paradise that must one day come about. In either case, the historical vision relies on the audience's sense of what could and should constitute an ideal closure. Finally, since narrativized history tends to define progress or the lack of progress in terms of a transfer or a failure to transfer from one moral plane to another, when the audience tastes the despair of defeat, it also frequently finds itself aroused or invited to arise in a moment or movement of protest, to seek in its own present the change blocked in the past, to bring about paradise, or to bring it one step closer. These three emotions, triumph, despair and protest, says James L. Smith, are the "basic emotions of melodrama, and the art of working each to its highest pitch occasions the catharsis of the form" (9).

The study of the modern Canadian historical play, with its essential melioristic, moralistic rhetorical intent and its melodramatic master shape, is, then, often the study of the "art" of building models for, and of drawing on, Canadian perceptions of "proper" historical closure by characterizing conflicts as clashes between good and evil. That is, regardless of whether one deals with experiences from the local, regional, gender, racial or class battles in Canadian history, and regardless of whether one finds one's heroes within any one of those subdivisions of the "Canadian" experience, the study of the modern Canadian historical play often becomes the study of techniques of dramatic shaping and presentation that seek to "work up" the audience towards appropriately didactic, cathartic attitudes and conclusions about their past, their present, and their future.

As the foregoing has suggested, any historical play must be evaluated on the basis of several considerations: the selected historical experience or type of experience it begins from; the process of its shaping, including such matters as any philosophy or ideology influencing the writer or collective doing the shaping,[10] and even the type of building or other performance space in which it was first conceived; the final shaped object itself, the play as presented to an audience; and the audience for whom it was created. All of these considerations contribute to the shaping of the play and of any historical vision, revision or myth it seeks to develop or promote.

In the chapters that follow, I concentrate on plays founded in the experiences of four of the smaller populations or interest groups most prominently singled out by Canadian historians and historical playwriters since the mid-1960s: regions, genders, races and classes. Chapter Two examines contrasting visions of the "region" known as Saskatchewan, as developed in Theatre Passe Muraille's The West Show (1975); 25th Street Theatre's Paper Wheat (1977, revised and published 1982); Globe Theatre's No. 1 Hard (1978); Rex Deverell's Medicare! (1980); and Ken Mitchell's "Great Plains trilogy," The Politician (1978), The Shipbuilder (1978, but since frequently and substantially revised), and The Plainsman (1985). Chapter Three looks at three versions of the Donnelly family massacre in southwestern Ontario: Peter Colley's The Donnellys (1974); Theatre Passe Muraille's Them Donnellys (1973, revised by a different collective 1974) and rewritten by Ted Johns as The Death of the Donnellys (1979), and James Reaney's trilogy, Sticks and Stones (1973), St. Nicholas Hotel (1974), and Handcuffs (1975). Chapter Four considers two plays based on the suffragist movement of the early twentieth century, and the career of Nellie McClung: Redlight Theatre's What Glorious Times They Had (1975), and Wendy Lill's The Fighting Days (1984). Chapter Five deals with plays based on racial conflict in Canada. James W. Nichol's Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons (1974), Herschel Hardin's The Great Wave of Civilization, (1976), and Michael Cook's On the Rim of the Curve (1977) examine "first contacts" between European or white culture and native peoples. Theatre Passe Muraille's Doukhobors (1971), and Sharon Pollock's The Komagata Maru Incident (1976) and Walsh (1973) examine experiences of "immigrants" into a Canada culturally defined and dominated by the descendants of two white "founding nations." Finally, Chapter Six looks at four plays based on clashes between the working class and management or the government, or between the "common people" and the ruling class: John Thomas McDonough's Charbonneau and Le Chef (1968); Carol Bolt's Buffalo Jump (1972); the collaboration between Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt (1973, revised 1974); and Rex Deverell and Geoffrey Ursell's Black Powder: Estevan 1931 (1981).

In following the course of Canadian history and historical playwriting through these chapters, I keep in view the essential melodramatic form and its role in helping to fashion all or parts of these plays, and the events and experiences they portray, into a functional part of the rhetoric of their time. How do these plays seek to advance the various objectives of the "reform-minded" era that began in the mid-1960s and that was a powerful influence on Canadian society for nearly two decades? Finally, as appropriate to individual plays, I trace the underlying desire to expose the fallacies of earlier myths of the "Peaceable Kingdom" with a genius for compromise, and to replace them with the myth of a flawed, fractious, but ultimately "Pacifiable" nation.

CHAPTER TWO: REGIONALISM:

The social anxieties of Saskatchewan

"Region," as William Westfall has pointed out, "can be a frustratingly imprecise" term applied to Canadian political, physical, social and cultural geography (229). Often we seem to use broad geographical terms to name or designate "regions," but the name is often more relative than specific, and even more metonymic than descriptive. In a common and largely unexamined usage, for example, "The West" frequently seems to mean the three "prairie provinces." But, then, "prairie" is itself an inexact or inappropriate designation, given the high percentage of the three provinces that is not "prairie" at all. "West" almost never means British Columbia, the westernmost province; British Columbia, to "westerners," is "The Coast," even if most of it is really "The Interior." A Vancouver tourist may find herself asked by a well-meaning and entirely unironic Regina store clerk, "How are you enjoying your trip to The West"? The tourist might even answer, with a similar lack of irony, "Fine." The "West" they speak of is not so much a geographical concept as an abstraction relative to "Central Canada" or "The East"--the former being geographically more accurate than the latter, since in Canada, "The East" usually means Ontario and parts of Quebec, or even the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle. It almost never means the provinces to the east of Quebec: these are "The Maritimes," or, sometimes, "The East Coast."

All of these "regions," while bearing geographical names, are examples of what Westfall defines as "functional" regions, defined not by environment or landscape, but by criteria such as provincial political boundaries, or other social, economic, political or administrative criteria (232) that cross physical divisions and cause residents and others to think of the area as a "region" of shared interest or activity. The defining element of shared interest or activity further suggests that such regions might also be thought of as what George Ryga has called "regions of social anxiety" ("Contemporary Theatre" 9), regions once defined by shared physical location with shared natural environmental problems, but now defined by the sense of shared political, social or economic problems--some of which may also be the result of geography. Because this sense of a shared social anxiety, or of sets of shared anxieties, is often the adhesive that holds the population of a region together psychologically, Ryga suggests, it is also a fundamental concern for Canadian theatre. Defining the anxieties and their effects he believes, was to become an instinctive contribution made by the emergent theatre of his generation:

> Perhaps we are defining the more visible details of a canvas on which our national hopes and frustrations are enacted. Perhaps we are doing

> what our earlier theatre should have done but failed in undertaking--recording in a human way the agonies and triumphs of yet another transition when nature or economics beat us back and alter the course of our destiny as a people. (9)

"Agonies" (or despair), "triumphs," and "transitions:" the first two are among the primary emotions stirred by melodrama; the third implies a sense of turning points in an ongoing historical narrative, with the moral prescriptiveness or didacticism associated with such moments in narrativized history. The stories and myths of triumphs and defeats experienced facing such challenges, or "anxieties," become natural, essential "regional" material for theatre, in Ryga's understanding of the term.[11]

It should come as no surprise, then, that a melodramatic pattern underlies many plays, historical or otherwise, based on regional experiences that register some of the sources of such anxieties, and that dramatize attempts to deal with them. We find it prominent, for example, in the plays that are the focus of this chapter, plays that come out of and examine the "region" known politically as Saskatchewan: The West Show (1975), by Theatre Passe Muraille; Paper Wheat (1977), by 25th Street Theatre; Medicare! (1980), by Rex Deverell and the Globe Theatre; and Ken Mitchell's "Great Plains" trilogy, The Plainsman (1985), The Politician (1978), and The Shipbuilder

(1978, but since frequently and substantially revised). The melodramatic pattern is also prominent, or evident, in plays centered in such other regions as that part of "the East" known geographically as Southwestern Ontario, a region that in Canadian theatre at least is associated with and haunted by the name "Donnelly," the focus of the next chapter. Yet a third chapter could develop around plays written about the "region" called Newfoundland, including plays such as Michael Cook's On the Rim of the Curve (see chapter Four, below), Geoffrey Ursell's The Running of the Deer (1978), and Tom Cahill's As Loved Our Fathers (1974). All of these plays present images of winners and losers in moments of transition, moments when the community or region, or some representative individual, comes under attack or is subjected to stress either from "outside," or from "within" (relative terms that, whether explicit or implicit within individual plays, are themselves indicative of a sense of regional solidarity).

Perhaps "regional" experience is particularly ripe for such a melodramatic pattern because "social anxiety" can arise from a large number of causes, each of which can be dramatized as the "local habitation of evil." Regions can, for example, have a sense of grievance against "outsiders" or "the centre." But then, inhabitants of the same political region, people who have shared the jurisdiction known as Saskatchewan, for example, can also have internal disputes that pit "sub-regions" or competing interest groups against each other from within. A region is defined both from within and from without by what it recognizes or characterizes as a threat or source of anxiety, by how it characteristically deals with its disputes, and by how it evaluates the outcome: success or failure.

One of the first modern attempts to characterize "The West" in theatrical terms was Passe Muraille's The West Show (1975). Perhaps it is a measure of their essential "Eastern" perspective that for Theatre Passe Muraille in 1975, "The West" effectively meant "Saskatchewan." The Toronto group, led by Paul Thompson, headed "west" to Saskatoon to try out their "house style" of collective creation, begun with Doukhobors and largely perfected with The Farm Show, on a new "region," to see if it could work "away from home." The idea, in part at least, was to extend the frame of reference and repertoire of Canadian characters available to the actors of the company, since Thompson had from the start of his tenure identified actor development as a high priority of the company (Usmiani 45), but actor development tied with capturing and performing "Canadian" types, not imported, generic theatre or motion picture types (Johns, "An Interview with Paul Thompson" 30). The objective was for the actors "to enter into the landscape and characters that help define 'the west'" (Thompson, The

West Show, "Introduction" 17). As Thompson further explains, the cast was "for the most part quite experienced in the collective mode." Two, Connie Kaldor and Eric Peterson, were from Saskatchewan; the others were "from away," as Newfoundlanders would put it. For the two Saskatchewan natives, "it was an opportunity to bring their acting skills back to their original province and attempt to rediscover characters and situations familiar to them" (17). For the others, "it was a challenge to explore and finally name some of the elements of the 'western' psyche and also come up with a show that would make sense to both a local audience and the folks back east" (17).

Emerging from five weeks of research and rehearsal, The West Show brings together a variety of material, some historical, some contemporary "current affairs," and some derived from fictional sources, most notably the novel The Blue Mountains of China by Rudy Wiebe. The play may not define, particularly for westerners, the greater region generally known as "The West," but it is a clear exercise in what Alan Filewod defines as one of the most significant beliefs underlying Passe Muraille's creative effort, Thompson's belief that "theatre can define the motifs and images which identify a culture," motifs and images that "point to the formative myths of a society" (Filewod, Collective Encounters 24-25). The motifs and images that The West Show collects and documents emerge from tales of attempts to overcome or alleviate anxieties resulting from a variety of natural, political, and social causes.

Putting aside the somewhat (and unconsciously) inflated claims implied by the title, the show does identify and demonstrate the implications of two dialectically opposed visions that are the main elements of the myth of the "west" that is Saskatchewan, a "west" that is "full of enormous individual and enormous collective efforts" (The West Show 25). As Diane Bessai and Don Kerr explain in their introduction to Showing West, one vision is that of the land of the determined "isolated individualist" such as Tom Sukanen, and of "fragmented societies" like the Metis populations of the north; contrasting this is "a vision of social cohesion through collective action" (8), the land of the co-operative movement and of the CCF.

While the Theatre Passe Muraille play is an example of the documentary revue form, linking short scenes thematically rather than as parts of an unfolding plot, it is a play in which "the moral dimension transcends" (Thompson, "Introduction" 19). Individual sections generally express a sense of polarization in society, a polarization that focuses sympathy to one side over the other, based on moral considerations. Tom Sukanen, who first as Jaanus Koronkola, later as Jaanus Karkulainen, was to become the hero of The Shipbuilder, finds himself mocked for his dream to build a ship and sail it down the

Saskatchewan River, through Lake Winnipeg, down the Nelson, and out to sea. Passe Muraille's treatment of this episode is much gentler than Mitchell's would be in its treatment of and attitude towards the scoffers, but rests on much the same conflict. Sukanen is treated as a bit of a crank by many, where Karkulainen, as was the original Sukanen of history, is declared insane and sent to a mental hospital.

A similar, more developed example of polarization sustains the Sam Reimer section, which is based on the chapter "The Vietnam Call of Samuel U. Reimer" from Wiebe's novel. Sam, acting on his faith that he has received a true calling to go "proclaim peace in Vietnam" (41), runs up against family, church and public opinion, and even federal government interference, all for his own good. Like Sukanen, Sam is viewed by some as a crank, perhaps as crazy. While his opponents, like Sukanen's have logic and reason on their side, Sam has faith, which puts him morally in the right. Furthermore, given the range of public opinion against the war itself, there is every possibility that even as late as 1975 sympathy would have tended virtually automatically towards any spokesman for peace. Furthermore, Sam's opponents, particularly the pastor, who seeks proof that Sam actually hears the voice of God, and representatives of the town, who seem not to want to have to bear the responsibility for his family, come across as hypocrites. Prevented on all sides from acting on his faith, Sam eventually dies, apparently from a sense of failure. As with the Sukanen scene, the Reimer section leaves hanging an implied "What harm could it have done to anyone but the individual?"

A later section, "Janet Reitz," treats what appears "to the outsider" to be "the most dramatic difference the west can display . . . the difference between the north and the south" (52). The sequence centres finally on the experience of the title character, who tries to serve her Metis people through the Metis Society and as an employee of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. Scenes here deal with the tension between "southern" justice and northern peoples and circumstances, and with racial tension as the Metis Society tries to learn "the white man's game" (59) and to settle land claims with the Department. The moral and legal right of things goes to the Society in this exchange: its tender for land was the highest, but, in a move that is reminiscent of something Passe Muraille had been exploring over the previous three years with Rick Salutin in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt (see Chapter 4, below), the Department passes over the Metis bid because of "other considerations," in this case the interests of a lumber company. Reitz eventually returns to the trapline, unable to resolve the two positions or to get results, given the intractability of the DNS, which after all sees things from an "outsider's" perspective. Her fear is not for herself but for her sons' future.

Contrasting the individuals who find themselves morally and politically outside the community or the power structure are instances where groups coalesce around shared senses of grievance and act collectively to address and, sometimes, solve problems. The Janet Reitz section in part addresses a community problem, though through one woman's experience. Similarly, the earlier Mme. Tourond section is introduced as the story of a woman, that is, of another individual. As would Mitchell's The Plainsman in part, the Tourond section offers a woman's perspective on the "Riel" rebellions. It covers a range of "anxieties," beginning with a sense of racial and gender tension, as Tourond suggests that the reason nobody has ever heard of her, in what Passe Muraille seems to want to "cast" as a predominantly white male audience, is that "the white men write the history books" (25, emphasis added). Behind Mme. Tourond's personal anxieties as a wife and mother, however, the essential community grievance remains: a small native population squeezed by a larger invading imperialist power. Within the Metis community there are other sources of anxiety, particularly between Dumont and Riel as to the objectives of the rebellion and the means to pursue it. Dumont speaks for the Metis way, and trusts to his sense of running, guerrilla warfare, which is "how we fight on the prairies" (34). Riel speaks for a different society, a "civilized" and

"Christian" society, and for fighting from a fortified centre. Riel, a fanatical individualist out of touch with his own people and their ways, prevails, and the Metis lose. In a rhetorical tactic that Passe Muraille had also already used in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, Dumont does not concede defeat, but, turning so that he speaks to both Mme. Tourond and to the audience, says "You tell General Middleton . . . That I am still in the woods" (38). This is the Marxist sense of history--"we" have not lost the struggle, just the battle.

Specific investigations into the myth of "collective effort" come late in the show, in the second act. Stories of collective and co-operative action begin with the Louise Lucas section, which covers the activities of the "Mother of the CCF." The section opens by reminding the audience of that other, combined, communal or co-operative effort half of the "western tradition," which has so far emerged only peripherally in the Tourond and Reitz sections. The Lucas section begins with the following analysis of the history of group endeavour in the west:

> In spite of the immense distances between people, or perhaps because of them, the west in Canada has been the centre of collective activity and the origin of a lot of co-operative reforms. (65)

That is, the physical separation that has been a geographical and political fact of life in the west becomes, perhaps, the source of anxiety, the cause that produces the "co-operative" effort. However, the Lucas section proper opens with a different explanation. "Myrtle," a farm woman, suggests that the CCF resulted from the failure of the older parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, to look after the farm population. Louise, in her speeches, identifies the "local habitation of evil" in the middle-men who put their profits ahead of the human needs of the producers. Her answer is the CCF and, she explains in a song, "Co-operation":

> Co-operation!
> I see it as salvation
> For the whole of mankind.
>
> It seems like practical
> Christianity
> And a chance to work for
> Humanity. (68)

The language of the song shows Lucas's ideals have moved into a moral rather than a political frame of reference.

Lucas's work for humanity goes beyond attempts to secure a better economic deal for farmers, of course. As has been the case earlier, the Lucas section deals with more than one source of anxiety. Another more 1970s "habitation of evil" emerges later in the section, as Lucas forces the farm husbands to recognize the unfair economic conditions under which their wives work, taking responsibility for much of the farm labour, but getting no personal financial return. The scene ends by holding out the necessity of and potential for women's participation in farm unions as an answer to this other immoral social and economic inequity, which robs an identifiable group of people of their dignity.

Finally, in "The Tractor Demonstration," farmers of 1969 join to protest to the federal government about inappropriate government policies and actions on the ongoing problems of the farm economy. Here, the problems come from the combined "evils" of government attitudes and bank demands, neither of which take into consideration the farmers' needs. Farmers cross political party allegiances on this occasion, to seek action on a shared range of problems. As the scene ends in 1975, another demonstration is about to set out, but conditions have changed for some, and not everyone is as willing to participate. As "George" says, "I guess times will have to get tough again before the people get moving" (86). The Passe Muraille analysis again seems to be that the mythic western capacity for collective action and co-operation is not so much a result of a shared sense of physical hardship and a response to the evils of physical isolation. Neither does the scene seem to support any sense that co-operation is a "natural" or innate behaviour of westerners. Rather, it seems to suggest that in a society of instinctive individualists (the element of "the West" that seems paradoxically to preoccupy the Passe Muraille _collective_ for most of the show), collective action emerges periodically as an _ad hoc_ situational response to shifting economic and political conditions.

The two defining "efforts" do not necessarily fit as comfortably or equitably together on the stage as they at times manage in the Saskatchewan mind. (I have, for example, met farmers who rely on several marketing boards, and who belong to the Wheat Pool or other co-ops, and yet consider themselves "real free enterprisers" because they operate "independent" farms.) Perhaps this uneasy rhetorical fit is why Passe Muraille was not only the first but has been to date the last to try to define "the west" (or at least Saskatchewan) in terms of such a dialogue between competing (and theoretically equally valid, morally) myths based on historical experience and necessity. While later theatres and writers working from within Saskatchewan have since examined the same or similar stories and characters, they have tended to side with and promote either the vision of the co-operative society or that of the isolated individual.

Paper Wheat and _Medicare!_, for example, advance the myth of collective action and co-operation. _Paper Wheat_ traces the origins of co-operation in the physical and economic hardships faced by the original farm settlers. _Medicare!_, while not about co-operation _per se_, is about an action taken by the first socialist government in North America, the government of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). In both plays the collective actions or ideals involve interest groups in competition with each other--one group representing the ideal of progress, the other of the status quo; in both cases, "progress" is the side of good, and stasis the side for evil. Mitchell's plays, dramas rather than documentaries, centre on strong individuals. In The Politician and The Plainsman, he features leaders--Nicholas Flood Davin, the first member of parliament for the North-West, and Gabriel Dumont, the Metis military leader in the North-West Rebellion, respectively. Their experiences reflect tensions within their communities and between those communities and the outside world. In The Shipbuilder, based on the Tom Sukanen story, Mitchell examines the fate of a strong individualist, someone not "representative" of his community, but in conflict with it. As was the case in The West Show, the community, or "community interest" comes under attack for its hypocritical, coercive efforts to limit individual expression and endeavour. Ironically, both sets of plays, the "collective" and the "individualist," are examples of what Ryga calls the emergent "social theatre" of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a theatre calling for "reform and compassion" ("Contemporary Theatre" 8). Moreover, as part of a theatre that "came to life in opposition to forces which destroy life and personality," they reflect, though in opposing visions of the scope of the problem and the possible solutions, a concern with "small but constant advances in the lives of average people" (9).

The origins and philosophy of 25th Street Theatre are in many ways typical of many alternative theatres that developed across the country in the early to mid-1970s. Its primary objective was to create and produce an "indigenous" drama, a body of plays growing out of the stories of the region in which it was located. Founding artistic director Andras Tahn's passionate enthusiasm for this project is symptomatic of a wider attitude among such alternative theatres:

> I can go back to Saskatchewan's primary sources. I can talk to the people who did the building or knew them, knew the people who we now name lakes and parks after. I can find a man who can tell us what it was like when there was no railroad, or what it was like to see a piece of ground not yet touched by a plough.
>
> And when you come to our plays and we talk about a crocus, it's your own bloody crocus. So what if it's not a cut flower imported from somewhere else. I'm a playwright and a politician and when you talk like this you sound

> imperialistic, but this is _my_ territory (the arts) and no commissions can change that.
>
> Surely we've got something to say to each other. I want a human environment so people can come to the theatre and say those are _our_ actors and _our_ story. That's _us_. . . .
>
> For me, what _Paper Wheat_ means is that our arts are now saying "I can write and sing and dance in a way that means something to me". (Perkins, "Play tells untold Saskatchewan story")

Paper Wheat, a play nominally based on the founding of the co-operative movement, especially the Wheat Pool, in Saskatchewan, is by far the best-known play ever created by 25th Street Theatre in pursuit of its objective. In its content, it meets the first of two criteria Westfall identifies as essential for a "regional literature": a "focus upon a distinctive experience (whether real or mythical)" (236). In its development and structure, it meets the second: "to experiment with ways of relating that experience" (236). In form and technique it is also a descendant of such Passe Muraille shows as _The Farm Show_ and _The West Show_, and an inheritor of Thompson's "mythic" approach. Passe Muraille used 25th Street's facilities as a base for their research and production of _The West Show_, and in return introduced the Saskatoon company to the techniques and possibilities of collective creation and documentary style, leading to the revue _If You're So Good, Why Are You in Saskatoon?_, directed by Thompson. However, as Tahn, who directed the original production of 1977 describes it, _Paper Wheat_ was not exactly a planned "sequel" to anything planted by Passe Muraille's own research into Saskatchewan, despite the fact that _The West Show_ and _Paper Wheat_ share one important character, Louise Lucas, and an interest in the Saskatchewan history of collective and co-operative effort.

Paper Wheat is also a product of serendipity, ironically a beneficiary of 25th Street's chronic need for funding. In 1975, Tahn called upon Eldon Anderson, the corporate secretary of Credit Union Central in Regina, to explain 25th Street's objectives and to ask for support. Anderson, a firm believer in corporate support for the arts, made an immediate donation not tied to any specific project, but also sat Tahn down and explained his own views and enthusiasms for Saskatchewan history, particularly of the agricultural community and its organizations. Impressed by Anderson's enthusiasm, and recognizing in the history of such organizations just the sort of material 25th Street was looking for, Tahn proposed a "co-op show" for the 1976-77 season. The plan was not so enthusiastically received by the board, who wanted something with greater obvious "hit potential," but the idea passed, and a collective of Sharon Bakker, Michael Fahey, Linda Griffiths, Bob Bainborough, Brenda Leadlay and Catherine Jaxon set out with Tahn in

January, 1977.

Only Tahn and Griffiths had any collective theatre experience, and only one, Bakker (a co-founder of the theatre), had any education in the western co-operative movement. She had attended the Western Co-op College at fifteen,

> but I didn't remember much except how a co-op was run. As far as its being a very vital part of Saskatchewan's history, it didn't strike me until I started doing the research. This play opened up a whole new spectrum of the people, politics and history of the province to me. (Perkins, "Co-op show idea faced scepticism" 5)

The show came together, as Tahn colourfully puts it, "by show and tell," amplifying, "Really, we stumbled on it. We were green and thrashing around in the dark. We banged our knee on something, said 'ow!' and the 'ow' was Paper Wheat" (Perkins, "Co-op show idea. . ." 4, 5). The research and development of the original show follows one common pattern for such shows: "We gave the actors a theme or project for the day, maybe told them to go out and bring back a character, or a story, or a song" (4). The original plan was to talk to people, mainly farmers, who had immigrated and settled. In this, Paper Wheat is a descendent of The Farm Show and of the oral history tradition made popular by Barry Broadfoot and others. Evidently, this group of enthusiastic city youths did little preliminary research in the records and histories of the period or the farm movements, so, with the exception of the Ed Partridge sections, which Bob Bainborough first developed from readings of Partridge's own writing, much of the original Paper Wheat, and subsequent revisions, rested largely on anecdotal evidence, which Bob Jeffcott notes tends towards the nostalgic, and results in a view that is "personal to the point of being uncritical" (29).

The interviews brought out the early problems with the land, the climate and the grain companies. After one such interview, two weeks into the research, Fahey mentioned a term of contempt that frustrated farmers had used to describe the way the grain companies had manipulated the price of grain on the commodities markets: the term was "paper wheat." Such talk of the problems led to talk of the solutions, and organizations like the Grain Growers' Grain Company, and its founder and social philosopher Ed Partridge of Sintaluta, Saskatchewan. Tahn also explains that it was in Sintaluta, where the show opened on March 18, 1977, that the collective "discovered the politics in what had so far been a human interest story" (Perkins, "Co-op show 4"). Here, less than two weeks before the scheduled opening, the group decided to make the Wheat Pool and grain marketing the focus of the show, a decision that allowed the group to identify which characters, scenes and songs to keep from the mass of material they had so far collected and charted. Typically of the collective process, this selection process also led to hurt feelings as favourite scenes or characters were cut.

The first full run-through was opening night, in Sintaluta, and "after each scene the actors checked a list pinned up back stage to see what scene came next" (Kerr, "Paper Wheat: Epic Theatre in Saskatchewan" 17). In spite of, or perhaps even because of, its painfully evident roughness, the play received immediate sympathetic response from most of its early audiences, especially in rural areas--a negative review in Regina standing out as a notable exception.

As the show toured five Saskatchewan centres, giving back to the many who had helped make it possible a vision of their collective story, essentially recasting people who had been "resources" into the new role of "audience" for their own story made theatre, scenes were reshaped, moved and removed. By the end of that research and production tour, the show had developed several key scenes that have remained with it through all subsequent revisions, and had attained its essential tone, style and shape, although subsequent versions replace about seventy five percent of the text. Paper Wheat incorporates humour, music and a theatrical presentational style to tell its story. Overall, it moves from episode to episode establishing a cause and effect relationship between the problems faced by the settlers and their efforts to solve these problems.

Act One deals with the "human interest" element, retelling stories of the lives of the settlers and their problems with climate, land, and man-made interference. Act Two deals with the politics, the founding of grain growers collectives and the Wheat Pool. This two-act, problem/solution structure is a common pattern in Canadian collective and documentary theatre, particularly that originated or influenced by Passe Muraille, who use the pattern in such plays as Buffalo Jump and 1837: The Farmers' Revolt. It is, however, also the pattern in shows with little or no connection with Passe Muraille, such as Black Powder: Estevan 1931 (1981), created by Rex Deverell and Geoffrey Ursell for Regina's Globe Theatre and in What Glorious Times They Had (1974), a collective by Redlight Theatre on Nellie McClung and the suffragist movement. The two-act problem/solution pattern, with its opening emphasis on exposition of the historical conditions that give rise to the conflict, is probably common in contemporary Canadian historical plays because the writers, intent on bringing "new" material to the stage, can not or will not trust the audience to know the story in its general outlines. Compare briefly this pattern with that of American Barrie Stavis, for example. In his The Man Who Never Died: A Play About Joe Hill (1951) and Harper's Ferry: A Play About John Brown

(1967) he spends no time on the background, going instead to the "final acts" of longer conflicts. In the Joe Hill play, he largely skips over the specifics of the strike that leads into the action of the play, focusing instead on Hill and the conspiracy against him, while in the John Brown play, he opens with Brown already overlooking the town and armoury, on the eve of the attack that will be the crowning, and culminating, act of his attack on slavery in the United States. Stavis, like most historical playwrights from the Greeks onwards, but unlike the Canadians who were soon to follow with historical projects of their own, seems able and willing to expect his audience to know the background.

Although they share a common general shape, Paper Wheat, and What Glorious Times They Had differ from the rest in that they are stories of triumph. Where the strikers of 1936, the rebels of 1837 and the coal miners of 1931 are all "losers," in Peter Weiss's sense of the word, the farmers, like the women in Manitoba in 1919, are clearly winners in that they overcome their various sources of anxiety to create new economic and political orders.

Though it has always tended to treat the sources of economic and political problems for the farmers as "evils," Paper Wheat was not originally as completely positive on the history of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan as it was later to become. In the original version there was some ambiguity about the founders' methods, if not about their results. Ed Partridge, a founder of the Grain Growers Grain Company and a philosopher of co-operative effort, was forced from his own creation because he was seen as too radical. This was historically accurate, but dramatically, and _mythically_, unsatisfactory, since the scene left the audience in some doubt as to whose side to be on in this particular matter, and tended to tarnish the image of the bold co-operative movement through an example of what might appear timidity and perhaps even jealous mean-spiritedness.

Prior to a second tour of the province in 1978, partly at the insistence of cast members who had chafed under his largely inexperienced directorship, Tahn hired the more experienced Guy Sprung from Montreal to restage and redirect the show. Sprung requested "the best fiddler in Saskatchewan" (Perkins, "Co-op show . . ." 5), which resulted in the hiring of Bill Prokopchuk of the Yorkton area. This addition brought to the play the texture and considerable emotional and theatrical influence of "the most important folk music instrument in Canada" (Proctor 127). Prokopchuk's fiddle bridges and accompaniments to the songs were to bring more of a sense of tradition than could the accompaniments by the more recent folk-guitar. The request for a fiddler also suggests that Sprung had plans to emphasise the "folk-tale" element and tone even before he had begun to work with the collective.

Because most members of the first cast were unavailable, Sprung brought three new actors, David Francis, Skai Leja, and Lubomir Mykytiuk, to join Bakker and Fahey to go through a second, three and a half-week research process to complement the earlier one. There was, Bakker later admitted, an initial "Western chauvinist" reaction to

> all these Easterners who were coming out to tell our story. . . . But they brought so much of themselves and their unique talents we were able to really explore collective creation and different theatrical techniques. Guy was very instrumental in pushing us as far as we could go, and by being very clear about what he wanted out of us as actors and writers. (Perkins, "Co-op show 5)

The extra experience and scope the new actors brought to the project is demonstrably important to the revised show: the spectacular juggling scene of Act Two, for example, which illustrates some of the realities of modern farm economics, and which has provided considerable challenge for subsequent actors playing the part, would never have been developed without Mykytiuk's talent to make it possible in the first place. However, the new cast members were no more knowledgeable about the west or the Wheat Pool or the co-operative movement than were the original cast, to begin with.

The effect of the new director on the show, Tahn admits, was like "turning a roughly chiselled piece of granite over to a master sculptor": "I'm no master, and Guy is a perfectionist" (5). Sprung gave the show its current shape, the one that not only toured Saskatchewan in late 1977, but the nation in 1979, and that is, for the most part, Tahn's published version of 1982, upon which readings of the play now substantially rest. That the second version became the better known and more "successful" is not, Tahn suggests, to discredit the earlier collective, since "in the end, everyone is responsible for that play, not the first collective and not the second but everybody loving and caring about it and seeing where it could go, which wasn't easy, especially at the start" (5).

Sprung's cast reduced the number of settlers in the first act from twelve to the present five and re-organized the human interest element around these five: Bill and Elizabeth Postlethwaite, an English couple, Sean Phelan, an unmarried Irishman, and Vasil Havryshyn a Ukrainian immigrant and his Latvian-born wife, Anna. In the second act, he expanded the politics and the historical period. Where the original version focuses on the Wheat Pool, and effectively ends at about 1924, moving directly to a later time when the old folks sit about recalling their past, the Sprung version broadens the issue to a more general thematic consideration of co-operation. It moves into later periods, and brings in newer problems as sources of anxiety for the co-op ideal to address itself to, problems such as the Great Depression of the 1930s and "threat" of multi-national grain companies. According to Don Kerr, this later version is "more overtly political" and the

> complex view of Partridge is replaced by one where we simply admire him. . . . In Sprung's version the capitalists today remain simple enemies to the good guys, the Wheat Pool, the co-operatives, and the farmer, and that fits the meaning of the play well enough. ("Paper Wheat: Epic Theatre . . ." 27)

Without mentioning the mode by name, Kerr's sense that the play becomes a battle between "enemies and "good guys" indicates his sense of a melodramatic aesthetic more completely taking over the play--an aesthetic that Kerr finds a suitable "fit," given the play's mythic rather than historical authenticity. As Kerr astutely points out, "The fact that there have been three versions of history in Act Two should be sufficient warning not to view the play as history" (28), but to see it, rather, as a distillation of myth of co-operation from history.

In editing Paper Wheat for publication, Tahn has removed some of the politics from the modern period, specifically the speech by Mr. Otto Gill, speaking for the interests of private, multi-national grain companies, and a bedtime story of the villainous Mr. Con Glomert whose vertical integration of the market gouges the farmer at every transaction. By doing so, Tahn returns somewhat to his own original vision of a play about the heroic efforts of people rather than about politics. The tension between the nostalgic retelling of the good stories of the settlers and the mythic documentation of the politics and techniques of the co-operative movement is a feature in all versions of Paper Wheat, and leads to rhetorical and thematic inconsistencies from segment to segment. However, even in the published version, though some of the allegorical political satire disappears, the myth of a natural, homegrown, and hence "virtuous" response to adversity remains.

The myth builds as the events depict a general movement in Act One from hearty but self-defeating independence to combined effort. The settlers arrive, telling of what they have left and what they hope to find. Their enemies take two forms: the self-interest of business, and the physical environment. Vasil buys an outfit from a smooth-talking store-owner, who tricks him into a contract that mortgages Vasil's homestead to the businessman. The store-owner has already sold the same outfit to four previous homesteaders who failed. (In this scene, the store-keeper greets Vasil in English and German before he hits upon Ukrainian. His "Yak sia Mayesh?", and Vasil's startled but delighted outburst in response, occasionally provided equal shock and delight for aging Ukrainian immigrant settlers in Paper Wheat's audience, a group who had probably never expected their story, let alone their language, to appear on a Canadian stage.) The stiff-necked Postlethwaite learns to accept aid from his neighbour, Vasil, who offers to lend him a plough to replace the one Postlethwaite has broken on a rock--co-operation to defeat the problems occasioned by the land itself. In "Stuck in the Mud," a scene that has disappeared from the published version, two farmers who get their wagons bogged down in the same mud hole, and who struggled independently to free themselves, join their strength to free both wagons. While this takes away from the presentational theatricality of the Act, similar thematic material remains in other, more "dramatic" scenes, including the broken plough episode.

Following "Old Bessie," a scene and song that depicts the particular hardships faced by the farm wife, committed to near slave-labour for her husband (a scene created by Bainborough, but retained through all subsequent versions), in "His grain is just a bit better than everybody else's," Elizabeth Postlethwaite and Anna Havryshyn meet. Anna has walked over for a visit to relieve another hardship, the loneliness faced by the women while the men were away. The two women eventually work their conversation around to the tight economics of farming, poor grain prices, cheating elevator agents, and their combined effect on their husbands' tempers. Neither Bill nor Vasil, it seems, intends to go to an organizational meeting of territorial grain growers called for that evening. While the women see combining crops and forces as an obvious solution to the cheating ways of the grain elevator agents, their husbands refuse. As Elizabeth explains: "Willie says his grain is just a bit better than everyone else's. He's so stuck up sometimes. He wants to be his own master, do everything by himself" (53). We see what they are up against in the following scene, "Who are the scales working for today?" as Sean, an Irish immigrant farmer, is cheated several ways on a load of flax. This unscrupulous theft proves the final provocation Bill, Vasil and Sean need. In "Exercise," a scene constant to all versions, though one tightened considerably by Sprung, Sean meets his two neighbours in a coffee shop. Bill and Vasil have already decided to go to the meeting; Sean enters swearing about the price he has just received. Vasil invites Sean to join them at the meeting, and in exchange, he and Bill will join him for a visit with the agent and, he adds, rolling up his sleeve, a bit of "exercise." The Act ends with the men united for action. They and the audience know for sure who the enemy is.

The first act contains one theatrically compelling but dramatically problematic scene, "Squeezing the Land." This scene was developed by the original collective as a story of courage in the face of a hostile environment, and has remained with the show, but has never found a comfortable place in any version. A couple folds, twists and wrings a blanket that represents their land and the effect of farming and climate upon it. They tell of the toll exacted on the land by a combination of drought and early farming methods, and the consequent strain on themselves, watching their dream dry up and blow away; these themes are in keeping with the "hardships" issue of the opening. The problem is that the couple initially overcame their hard times not through their own deliberate actions, nor through co-operation with their neighbours, but by luck and passivity--the combined facts that "there was no place for us to go" (43), and that, eventually, there was a winter with heavy snow, and a spring with rain, so they were finally able to get a crop off again, and make a new start. While the scene ends with them reaffirming their attachment to the land, and explaining that, given this second chance, they learned to survive and make a living in this harsh environment by adapting their farming methods and expectations to suit the land, the fact remains that they have done so alone, and virtually by accident. There is not the sense found in other scenes in Act One of them being part of a greater population facing the same problem, something that could have been solved by adding a line or two about "our neighbours," for example, or speaking not just of their farm, but of their district. It is undeniably a powerful and evocative piece of nostalgic story-telling, but within the rhetoric of Paper Wheat, it does not connect with the main themes of the rest of the act, or of the play.

Although Act One mentions a wide range of difficulties--though, as Kerr and others point out, nothing like the range of traditional "Western" complaints involving railway freight rates and eastern (Ottawa) abuse of the westerner--the overall movement from beginning moves from confrontation with physical hardship to confrontation with man-made hardship. The co-operation that has helped overcome the environmental problems, that is made to appear a natural consequence of living conditions in the same physical, geographic region (what is, in Westfall's terms, a "formal" region defined by similarity of landscape and environment) (230), finds a new application as the obvious, necessary, and "natural" solution in the political and economic region of "social anxiety" that develops as the community of settlers begins to understand and respond to its shared problems.

Act Two shifts from the dramatized small community of settlers to a more historical, documentary mode that traces the idealized history of western agricultural and social co-operation from 1905 to the present, beginning with the Ed Partridge sequence. Partridge introduces himself on a railway platform as he prepares to leave for Winnipeg to find out how the Grain Exchange works, and expresses his fundamental belief that "we farmers are going to change the world" (56). This theme runs as a standard against which to judge the good and the bad for the rest of the Act. The "world" the farmers will begin with is that of the corrupt capitalist world of the commodities market, whose legal but immoral manipulations are sent up in "The grain exchange rag": "I've got grain to sell; it's not even mine. / It's made of paper and it's borrowed on time" (56-7), continuing smugly, "We hold the cards; we know the tricks; / You'll never get us, 'cause we work in cliques" (57). Partridge reappears, addressing the sort of meeting that Bill, Vasil and Sean were about to attend at the end of Act One, and explaining that the song we have just heard is "about how the Grain Exchange appeared to me" (57). His speech repeats in a more prosaic way the significant details of the operations of the Exchange, and calls for a united action on the part of the farmers to buy their own seat on the Exchange and to market their own grain. Such a progressive change in the system will help break up the virtual monopoly over grain prices exerted by the five main companies. His speech leads into another highly graphic scene, "Grain Growers' Grain Company," in which four sad-faced farmers, each with small sheaves of wheat, wander onto the stage, and hit upon the idea that by putting their sheaves together, they have one large one--and marketing power.

A curiously anachronistic "radio broadcast" follows, repackaging history as a detective story that "uncovers" the unethical (though in some cases "legal") efforts by the grain companies to break up the farmers' organization which is cutting so heavily into their profits. These efforts include having the Grain Growers' credit stopped by the banks (another traditional enemy of the farmer), taking court action to force the company to stop their popular dividend system, almost getting them "kicked off the Grain Exchange" (60), and hiring a newspaperman to write a series of letters to Winnipeg farm publications ridiculing the Grain Growers' in an attempt to undermine farmers' confidence in their own company. Again, concerted group action overcomes the reactionary efforts, as farmers threaten to cancel their subscriptions if the letters continue to appear.

The Partridge section continues with him reading from the book he is writing, War on Poverty, in which he spells out his ideas for a co-operative commonwealth, and a "Co-operative Western State" named "Coalsamao" (from the names of the three "prairie" provinces). He explains how his ideas have been ruled "too fast" even by members of the company he founded, but ends with a message of hope in the form of a poem by Charlotte Gilman, satirizing the "clinching argument" to the "neolithic mind," the argument that "you can't change human nature." He speaks of a newer co-operative movement afoot, to form a "wheat pool" to help control prices. He is not involved, but wishes them luck as he goes back to his writing, ending with the "shocking" revelation that "lately people have taken to calling me--a dreamer" (64). Clearly, the audience is expected to side with him in his dreams of a fairer, kinder, more co-operative world. If we fail to pick this up from the virtue of his dreams, we are moved that way in a song, "The man from Sintaluta," which praises Partridge as one who "took a stand for the common people, / Against the power that was tearing them apart" (64), but his part in developments in the play, and in the myth, ends here and "Farmer Leo" enters to describe the formation of the wheat pool.

It is 1924, and the pool seeks to sign up six million acres. Leo is an individualist and a sceptic, but a series of quick scenes, mainly humorous, illustrate the means by which recruiters met this objective. They end with Leo, a convert to collectivism, signing up as the last two hundred acres. The segment repeats in a small scene the overall pattern of Act One, reinforcing the "natural" solution of co-operation. The segment ends with a "co-operation" dance in which a couple, each with only one tap shoe, combines to create the effect of one person tapping. Together, the messages on the back of their shirts spell out

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Following their dance comes an authentic (though unauthenticated) piece of Wheat Pool history, H. W. Ellerton's 1926 "Wheat Pool Song," which was used to recruit farmers. The song, which first appears in the 1978 version, and replaces a scene from the original production that expressed some of the same sentiments, predicts "You'll be proud to be a farmer / When the story's told," a prediction Paper Wheat rather obviously sets out to make good on.

Two quick scenes, "Drought," which uses a bit of folklore also used by Gwen Pharis Ringwood in her play The Rainmaker (1945), and "Louise Lucas," take the play once again through the physical hardship / collective response pattern in response to the 1930s dust bowl. Lucas speaks of how farmers have combined in the past to overcome the greed for profits of the grain companies, and to meet such natural disasters as prairie fires. She calls for further co-operation now, to extend the principle to "all the things we need for daily life" (70), including food, clothing, farm implements, health care, and credit, all forms of co-operative enterprise and marketing that eventually came about as a "windbreak against the future" (70).

Following this idealistic speech, in "The Co-op song," with its chorus "Co-operation . . . / Just ain't part of my operation" (70), the play moves into the present, where the idea of co-ops is under attack. The scene has created numerous difficulties, and gone through numerous revisions to try to focus its attack. In the Sprung version, published in Canadian Theatre Review 18, 1978, a 1970s family eats a "co-op" meal of products bought at the co-op store. The family is obviously well-off and planning another trip to Arizona for the winter. The co-op idea seems to have succeeded in making them all wealthy. The father, however, has little use for the co-op, while the mother and daughter still hold to many of its principles. The mother tells the cautionary tale of Mr. Con Glomert, but the father announces his plan to take his grain to the private (multi-national) grain elevator down the road. At this point a representative of that company comes in and speaks unctuously of "free enterprise," that part of the "American dream" that the "Grain Exchange Rag" had satirized in Act One. He promises all sorts of benefits and patronizes the outmoded ideal of the Wheat Pool, which is just no longer necessary in times of affluence, like these. He even echoes Partridge, intoning that the farmer will naturally go where his best interests lie, meaning in this case to the private company, because "It's just human nature. And you can't change human nature" (88), thereby unwittingly branding himself and all who think the same way, a "neolithic man." In the 1979 tour version, the spokesman ended by advising that his deprecation of the Pool and his forecast of the future of the "democratic" free enterprise way was just his own opinion, but that the farmer was free to check it out with head office--"in Chicago." With or without the Chicago reference, the scene ends with the father suddenly seeing the danger in his ways, tearing off the Cargill cap he had been wearing, sometimes to exchange it for a Pool cap. Symbolically, his head is back in the "right" place, and so, we may assume, is his heart.

In the 1982 published version, Tahn brings in more modern farm economics earlier in the scene, and discloses some of the failings of the Pool and co-ops, and how they operate now much like any other business interests. Tahn's scene seems calculated to answer criticisms like those of Bob Jeffcott in 1977 that the play fails to mention this aspect of the story (30), but it meets this purpose only at the price of overall thematic consistency. The daughter, dubbed "Prissy Little Miss Co-op" by her brother, has been to a Land-use Policy Meeting, and warns her callous brother that he would not be able to afford to take over the family farm right now, even if he wanted to. She is, however, less naive than her mother about the kind of enterprise co-ops have become in the modern period, noting some unfair treatment of some co-ops' own employees. The issue, once raised, is allowed to drop on the kind of comic line that Filewod cites as one of the recurrent ways Paper Wheat evades such issues. Faced with charges of unfair treatment of employees, the mother answers with a confused "Co-ops are for people--not for employees" (72). The scene then moves illogically into the juggling routine that explains modern farm economics, a scene that does not actually refer to co-operation. In 1982, the external free enterprise threat, like the internal moral threat, is thus not resolved.

The juggling routine is a virtuoso theatrical moment in which the son explains and illustrates what he has learned about the price of bread and how little of it goes to the farmer. This is more an economics lesson than a lesson in co-operation, except, perhaps, by implication--farmers are again getting little return for their work, and must act to correct the situation. If the scene were cut, Paper Wheat would lose nothing thematically, but would suffer theatrically. The only case that might be made for its content is that it remains because it is at least on the right (which is to say, the "left") side, the farmers' side.

Paper Wheat ends by returning to the human interest element. First, several old folks reminisce about their past social life and a bit of the history of the family farm, ending with the sad detail that a young descendent of one homesteader sold the land out of the family. Again, nothing about co-operation per se enters the scene, except, marginally, in the way the community would came together to have a dance. Then, in all versions, Paper Wheat closes on the "sod-buster" speech, written by Linda Griffiths. The speech ties in and extols the virtues of the underlying theme of reform, a theme linked earlier by Ed Partridge to the creation of a more co-operative society. After reminiscing on the glories he has seen, and the transformations he has witnessed and worked upon the landscape (that is the physical region), the old man recounts the social and economic changes he has seen and been a part of (which moves his sense of place into a more functional concept of region, a place of shared anxieties and shared solutions). He concludes by wishing he could trade all the memories and all the achievements (a word that emphasises the positive reading of "change") for the opportunity "to be young again and feel that I could change the world" (75). The line can be read as aimed at a variety of audiences. In one sense it is a typical rallying cry for the youth of the day to act to reform the society they live in, but this would be contradictory to the overall rhetoric of the play itself, which celebrates success and completion, the finding and establishing of the definitive response to the anxieties that originally created and defined the region in which they live. It seems more likely that the line is to be understood as an affirmation of the worth of what the sod-buster and his generation have done, and an invitation to acknowledge the principle that it would be worth doing again, if and, possibly, when necessary.

As history, or even as current affairs, Paper Wheat is obviously deficient. As a piece of regional myth-making, ideologically "affirming community values" that it tries to define and reinforce, the play has equally obvious strengths in the way it turns events, real and fictional, into an entertainment that helps define a regional experience. Undoubtedly, as Filewod and others point out, it most effectively preaches to the converted, appealing to the "broader romantic sentiment" (Collective Encounters 111) of those willing to believe in the success and the heroic nature of the struggles of their own or their families' past.

In concentrating on success, Paper Wheat differs markedly from No. 1 Hard, another "wheat pool" documentary, developed at about the same time by Regina's Globe Theatre. The unpublished Globe play follows the Cheeseman precept of documentary authentication through reliance on textual sources for the words spoken on stage. It shuns the invented scenes common in Paper Wheat. Furthermore, it "argues the minority case, that the status quo is immoral, and that the heroic myth of the co-operative movement is false" (Filewod 88). Furthermore, No. 1 Hard "analyses the grain industry as a political struggle in which the farmers are still engaged" (Filewod 89). It is a play where the juggling scene of Paper Wheat would fit thematically, but not textually, being "invented." In performance, No. 1 Hard included up-to-date statistics and topical reports, and engaged the audience in political discussions after the show. In this it is an example of a common documentary form, the "topical problem play" (Mason 265), a documentary engaged in the rhetoric of the unfinished business of the past.

In one telling contrast, No. 1 Hard presents the vision of Ed Partridge, one of the unquestionable heroes of Paper Wheat, as an unfinished or unrealized vision. Partridge enters as a "preface" to the show, with what becomes a metatheatrical speech against which to measure the present of the audience:

> Western Canada, to my mind, is marvellously suited to be the stage and the people to furnish the cast for a wonderfully interesting politico-socio-economic national life-drama, having for its motif a great co-operative experiment; not a tragedy--the world has had enough of state tragedies--but a noble melodrama wherein the bad shall be discomfited, the good vindicated and things generally set right in individual and social life. . . .

In Paper Wheat, this melodrama is played out through selective shaping of events into "a simple and intense myth by which people today can still live; a myth of co-operation" (Kerr 28). It is inescapably evident, for example, in scenes such as the "radio broadcast," where the conventions of the detective story cast the independent grain companies and their allies and accomplices in the role of "bad guys", and the Grain Growers' company in the role of "good guys." In No. 1 Hard, this myth is shown to be a false reading of events, as the Wheat Pool and co-ops become just other examples of corporate enterprise and pursuers of profit, while the problems remain.

The differences in the two plays argue against Filewod's uncharacteristically short-sighted claim that the two plays were written for the "same" audience (Collective Encounters 80), unless you read "audience" in the broadest of terms, to mean "Saskatchewan." Paper Wheat, with its essential appeal to the heart, to sentiment, probably works best for an audience essentially as ignorant, both of history and of the current situation, as the casts that created it, which may in part explain some of its wide "national" appeal. No. 1 Hard, on the other hand, with its documentary appeal to the intellect, requires "a basic familiarity with the subject matter on the part of the audience" (Filewod 88). It seeks to make its critical case for the problems of the grain industry to an audience willing to acknowledge those problems. Both audiences are available in Saskatchewan, but they are not necessarily "the same."

Although he had worked with the collective on No. One

Hard, with Medicare! Rex Deverell first attempts to explore on his own the texture and effect of

> the kind of rhetoric that crisis moments in history produce. . . . In Saskatchewan, that means the rhetoric of the farmer, railing against the East and the CPR, or of the socialist, crying for social change, or of the doctors, protesting the effect of that movement on their income. (Perkins, "Drama expounds")

In speaking of "crisis moments" Deverell reveals his sense of history as a narrative with moments when change was possible, if not always successful. In Medicare! he recreates a relatively successful moment, though one eventually compromised. In another play, Black Powder: Estevan 1931 (see Chapter 4), he finds another, though this time unsuccessful, moment of social and political stasis. Because he looks for such moments in the public struggle, he almost automatically commits himself to a melodramatic shape, since melodrama is, as Robert Heilman observes, "the realm of social action, public action, action within the world" (97). Furthermore, in choosing to work with the rhetoric of such public occasions, he almost by default commits himself to a melodramatic tone, since, in such conflicts, each side typically tries to pass itself off as the defender of public interest, and the other as a scheming, potentially evil threat (Heilman 91). Even if the actual parties or their representatives resist this configuration or interpretation of events and issues, the public itself tends to see the political leader in terms of "hero of melodrama," with "his opponent the villain" (91). So, it would seem from reading Medicare!, does the playwright. In largely adopting the Cheeseman practice of putting on the stage only what the record says, Deverell in Medicare! leaves little room for argument over the authenticity of what the characters say. This is important in Saskatchewan, and for a treatment of an event such as the medicare crisis, where the "history" is fairly recent, and where participants in the events staged can occasionally be on hand to "watch themselves." In the case of Medicare!, which was first performed in the round in Regina's Trianon Ballroom, the effect was doubly startling, as "during more than one performance the audience could watch the real participants watching themselves portrayed on the stage in the room where the same battle had been waged eighteen years before" (Deverell, "Playwright's Preface" 182). In such circumstances, the Cheeseman approach, which appears to let "history," or "the record" speak for itself, has obvious appeal as a way for the playwright to protect himself against charges of inaccuracy.

The method may well also serve as a defence against charges of political or historical bias, and it is such charges Deverell may well want to deflect. Through his selection and ordering of events and speeches, and in choosing to see the overall pattern of the Saskatchewan medicare crisis as a "progression" of "hope, fear, frustration and victory" ("Medicare! As a one man collective" 179), Deverell goes beyond replicating the melodramatic tone of the debate to cast the participants and their stands on the issues within a melodramatic frame. Certainly the play recapitulates the complex range of public issues surrounding the medicare crisis. It raises such matters as broken promises to consult with the doctors, external intervention in provincial politics by the American and Canadian Medical Associations, the issue of whether the CCF had a political mandate to press their program, individual rights versus public rights, and the final compromise that virtually eliminated community clinics as an effective component of medical services in Saskatchewan. However, even though, as a "Cheeseman" documentary, it replays these events largely through words spoken at the time, or by those recollecting events later, in its selection and treatment of those words, Medicare! characterizes the participants in the debate, the positions they take, and, ultimately, the relative merits of the two sides, in terms of progress and stasis--the situational defining qualities of good and evil.

As Deverell himself notes in reference to Black Powder, while the Cheeseman method is

> helpful in dealing with controversial or politically tendentious subjects because it lends an air of authority to the work, . . . it does not prevent an artist from twisting or exploiting the material to his own ends. ("Black Powder: The Text" 72)

Indeed, in Beyond Batoche (1985), Deverell actually dramatizes a playwright twisting documents in just this way. A creative team has already decided to make Riel the hero and Sir John A. Macdonald the "villain" (99) of its own imaginative reconstruction of the North-West Rebellion. They are told, however, that eastern backers of the project want him to "go easy on Macdonald" (99). To keep his own vision of Macdonald as "deceitful," "manipulative," "unprincipled," and "a white supremacist" (99), Matt, the playwright, turns to documentary evidence and lets Macdonald's own words work against him. When Shane, the actor who will play Riel, asks after a reading of some particularly damaging passages from some of Macdonald's correspondence, "Will they accept that?", Burns, who has lined up the backers, answers, "They'll have to" (101). Who could argue with the man's own words, after all: they must reflect the truth of his character. Yet the suspicion remains that other equally suitable words could have been found to promote a more positive, even virtuous Macdonald, if they had been wanted or needed.

The scene illustrates a key difference between drama and documentary. Deverell claims that documentary approach differs from "traditional historical drama" in that, in drama, "speech is invented to fit the history" ("Medicare! As a one man collective 178, emphasis added). However, in Medicare!, Deverell follows something of the same principle he has Matt act on later. Rather than invent speech, the Cheeseman/Deverell documentary process finds speech to fit the historical interpretation. The playwright is at liberty to look for appropriate pieces of the record to suit a characterization already assigned to a given individual, or, in the public domain, to a class, party or interest group. He may then fit them into what Cheeseman called "the shape of a show," and this also appears to have been what Deverell has done here.

To create effective order out of the documents and conversations he had as his raw material, Deverell had to make what he calls "artistic (or at least crafty) decisions" ("Medicare! As a one man collective" 178). This involved arranging events into a chronological narrative and subjecting history to the value judgements of drama. As he reviewed the records, he asked "Where are the builds and denouements, the contrasts, the ironic possibilities in juxtaposing scenes or events or speeches?" (178). Even though he describes this process as "learning the story's aesthetic, its shape" (178), it appears that what Deverell may have done was begin with a predetermined cause and effect story shape (since history does not have "builds and denouements," for example), or recognize the potential to create such a shape out of the material he had on hand. He then selected events and speeches that would fit, or could be made to fit, into his understanding of the pattern: action, reaction, conflict, and resolution.

That Deverell's interest in writing Medicare! is not just in repeating the rhetoric *per se* is evident from his own analysis of political language, its purposes, and his own purposes in reappropriating documented speech:

> Speech is for something. Words are not uttered without goal or motive. They always seek. Usually they seek power. Sometimes they defend and hide. Sometimes they probe. Arranging the rhetoric of *Medicare!* was a kind of dramatic version of "found poetry." I had to show it, show its effect within the drama and allow it to have an effect on the present day audience. (179)

The ends of "made" speech are essentially those also of "found" speech, and Deverell might easily have said "Words are not selected without goal or motive." Note that in the last clause Deverell does not say that his purpose was to let the rhetoric have the effect its originators desired. Rather, he arranges for the words to have *an* effect: *his* effect, to convince his audience that things worked out for the better, if not for the best.

Sensitive to the language of public debate, Deverell is well aware that rhetoric is not all of one kind. One of the ways he divides the good, or pro-medicare, side from the bad, or anti-medicare side, is through their preferred rhetorical styles, which are likewise "good" and "bad." Good emerges through organized, logical, reasonable argument, with strong, or at least positive sounding, supporting evidence. Bad seeks to prevail through "false logic," including methods such as ad hominem argument, and through lying, name-calling, slander, intimidation, and fear and hate mongering. Any reasons given tend to sound negative. While Deverell does show both sides occasionally using evasive language, or abusing its opponents, the doctors' side, with its supporters in the Liberal Party, tends to be the one most given to "bad" rhetoric to achieve its ends, while the government side tends to use stirring talk of social justice and human rights, and of progress towards a new world. Furthermore, few of the doctors or their supporters have, or are given, as much opportunity to display the oratorical skill and power of logic displayed by the two main government spokesmen, the premiers who brought medicare into existence: T. C. Douglas and Woodrow Lloyd. The abrasive tone of Liberal leader Ross Thatcher and the scandalous, bombastic Red-baiting of Pere Athol Murray may give eloquent proof of the passion of the anti-medicare forces, but they create a bad impression of the side. Finally, to reinforce this melodramatic polarization, Deverell's "ironic juxtapositioning" of speeches and events tends most often to undermine or satirize the position of the anti-medicare speakers.

Deverell's overall techniques and sympathies are amply evident even from the first few scenes. He begins with the first public announcement by Douglas of CCF government plans for medicare. Douglas's speech is a model of rhetorical shaping. He follows a long recitation of government accomplishments by saying that the government is now "in the act of planning a program of medical care for the province" (186). The positioning of the announcement in such a context makes the program seem the next "logical" step in "our" CCF goal "to build a new society" (185). However, if Deverell were interested only in the origin of the medicare debate, he uses far more of Douglas's speech than he needs. By using as much of the speech as he does, Deverell "lets" Douglas raise questions for both his own and Deverell's respective audiences. For example, when Douglas describes for his own audience the world of famine and little wars that exists around them, and asks "is this the best society we can build?" (185), Deverell plants the same facts and questions in his own audience's minds. After all, the situation in 1980 was different from 1959 only in intensity, not in kind. Furthermore, when Douglas targets vested interests and their control of governments as the villains holding back social progress and the CCF ideal of economic democracy, there is an implied invitation to Deverell's audience to consider whether that goal is any closer, and those or similar interests any less a threat in their own time. In the speech there is, of course, no invitation to consider whether the CCF ideal is a desirable one.

There is one further significant component of Douglas's speech. He identifies and mocks the persuasive techniques of his opponents, and in doing so, he alerts his audience and Deverell's to the matters of language and rhetoric in public debate. He points out and mocks some of "their" tactics, such as hiring public relations firms to create slogans and to sell leaders during election campaigns. In Medicare!, it is only the opponents of the plan and legislation who later hire such a firm, and who create and use slogans such as "Keep Our Doctors." Through his selection and placing of Douglas's speech, Deverell makes such practices suspect, even laughable, long before they appear in the events as he shapes them. No parallel scene lets the audience in on any possibly shady persuasive tactics by the CCF and pro-medicare forces. In the absence of any parallel counter argument, Douglas's standards become the standards against which the audience is asked to judge "good" and "bad" (or responsible and moral as opposed to irresponsible and immoral) persuasive techniques, while his own language, which is rich in "new society" salesmanship, goes unchallenged.

The opening introduces a technique Deverell uses throughout. He follows the recreation of the meeting "as it happened" with a version of it "as remembered." Arthur Thibault, who has just appeared as a character in the re-enactment steps forward in the "present" to comment on the speech we have just heard. He recalls how little fuss there was at the time, then explains why he was behind medicare, telling a poignant, persuasive, exemplary tale of how rural children had died in the past because of inequities in the medical care system. These two speeches side by side, Douglas's and Thibault's, establish the "good" side of this debate, and demonstrate the solidarity of the government side from the start.

Scene Two, "The Doctors," introduces the opposing side in the debate, and an opposing kind of language. The two doctors, Scott and Wilson, are composites, and their dialogue here and throughout the play is an imaginative, "semi-fictitious" (186, n) reconstruction, based on the kinds of conversations doctors were having at the time. Two matters stand out. First, unlike the politicians we have just heard, the doctors appear divided on medicare. Secondly, Wilson, the anti-medicare doctor, uses (is, in fact, given by Deverell) a colourful, emotionally charged vocabulary and turn of phrase. He speaks of his fears about how "They're going to ram it through, you know" (187) and of how "They're going to socialize us" (188). As the play progresses, talk of how they are "ramming it through" and "ramming it down the public's throats" becomes almost a refrain, especially in the speeches of Ross Thatcher. Wilson tries to make Scott as fearful as he is himself, but Scott just does not seem to see the seriousness of the issue. He doubts, for example, that the government will turn the doctors into civil servants. He reacts sharply to Wilson's suggestion that, under medicare, "they might not give you a choice" (189) to use blood transfusions in surgery. Seen by Deverell's audience against the reality of twenty years later, Wilson's fears, representative though they may be of the kind of thing being said at the time, seem ridiculous and his reaction extreme. Scott's scoffing has more "currency." Deverell further undercuts Wilson's position by intercutting the doctors' fictitious conversation with a radio broadcast by Douglas, and by direct address from Douglas "himself," in which he explains his position and its underlying principles in counterpoint to Wilson's objections. Douglas has a personal story similar to Thibault's, of how poverty almost cost him a leg as a child because his parents could not afford the necessary treatments. The politicians give positive (though, given their characteristic use of children in their examples, emotionally manipulative) reasons for their plan, while the doctors are able to offer only negative, essentially selfish reasons for opposing it: they like things the way they are, and do not wish to see any change or any threat to their established professional prerogatives and privileges. As Wilson snorts and worries and indulges in some name-calling by accusing the government of wanting "to get their grubby little socialist fingers into everyone's business" (191), Douglas calmly explains away each of Wilson's objections. He even denies directly any desire to push the plan down the doctors' throats, and invites them to co-operate in a "forward step" (191). Since co-operation has, as Paper Wheat tried to establish, a mythical status as "the way we do things out here," in Saskatchewan, such an invitation carries considerable social weight--with Douglas's audience at the time, and possibly with Deverell's later.

Finally, the scene has the rhetorical effect of putting Douglas and medicare "on the side of history." Douglas prophesies that before 1970 there will be a national health insurance plan. Since by the time the audience sees this prediction in the play such a plan was already in place, Douglas shows himself not only able to predict the future, but to initiate the actions that will bring the future about. The doctors appear to be trying to stand in the way of progress.

As the action progresses through an election campaign conducted almost as a referendum on medicare, on to the introduction and passage of the bill, the same essential tone and techniques continue. The anti-medicare forces try to terrify their patients into voting against the CCF by raising chimerical threats against the future of medical practice in Saskatchewan. The CCF and its supporters continue to press for a palpable social benefit. Friendships break up. Fights break out. Positions harden. Finally, the doctors go on strike, and in the middle of it all, in a scene entitled "Tragedy," a baby dies. It is a moment of high dramatic possibility, but one that Deverell mishandles.

An obviously distraught Vicky Derhousoff blames the government for the death. The grim irony is that Derhousoff and her family, poor and living at the edge of their resources, are precisely the kind of people medicare was supposed to help. She tells a sensational (or perhaps sensationalizied) story to the press of a frantic car ride past closed hospitals, trying to get to the nearest open emergency service in Yorkton, while her baby gasps out his life in her arms. While this is certainly the kind of story bound to get headlines in such a time, what purposes does it serve Deverell's case? He apparently wants to show the effect of the doctors' campaign of misinformation, since Derhousoff repeats the cliche about how the strike is a result of the government's "ramming" the plan down the doctors' throats, then illogically attacks the plans as "too darned expensive" (242) especially as her husband has been out of work for most of the year. If this is true, the audience must ask, how had she planned to pay for any other health care plan, or for the services? By making her confusion and pain serve such a purpose, Deverell uses her almost as cynically as the newspapers used her to stir up interest among their readers.

There is another problem with this scene. It closes with a defensive Dr. Sam Landa trying to deflect any blame from the doctors, while still trying to maintain the benefit of the fear such an event promotes. He "admits" that this is "exactly what we were afraid of" (242), but the audience might find itself asking why the doctors were not afraid enough not to go on strike in the first place. Landa suggests that the baby possibly died of a form of meningitis, and that the doctors might not have been able to do anything for him, even without the strike. Only a coroner's report, he concludes, can clarify the matter. The question of cause of death and possible responsibility is by this time vital to Deverell's audience as well. Is the strike responsible? Is anyone to blame? Who? Deverell never answers these questions. By leaving them dangling, he loses an opportunity to cement the scene as an example of the damage done by the strike, regardless of whom we hold responsible for the strike in the first place. He limits the impact of the death to its shock effect alone, again a needless sensationalizing of one family's disaster.

The Saskatchewan solution finally reaffirms itself in the resolution of the strike. A character known only as "NFU (National Farmers' Union) Man" addresses Deverell's audience directly, recalling how he and others like him started "taking things into our own hands" (256), by raising money for a community clinic in Biggar. A brief dramatized scene shows the response to a fund drive, especially on the part of supporters of medicare. "The people" take over for themselves, and pursue their interests collectively, thereby helping the new premier, Lloyd, "stick to his guns" (257) and bring an end to the strike.

However, the play does not end with the settlement. In a scene typical of documentary theatre, Deverell concludes with an "Afterword" that allows actors to "report" some of the responses Deverell received when word got out that the Globe was planning a play about medicare. The comments help establish how much the events remained of current interest some two decades later, and how the mere mention of the issue could still stir emotions. The final actor cements the "social progress" perspective, commenting that "somebody had to be first" and that the whole country benefitted in the end, saving Canada from being "in the same predicament as the States" (259). The final word, however, goes to Dr. Hjertaas, a physician who worked for the Prince Albert community clinic and for medicare. His is a vision of progress compromised. The agreement that ended the doctors strike has, it seems, led to government interference in the practice of medicine, and to have limited the effectiveness of the community clinics that had held the promise of more effective reform of medical services in Saskatchewan.

Deverell, then, does not attempt to close the matter completely. Rather, he lets history redefine the problems from a new, more socially advanced position, and keeps the grounds for debate open while establishing the standards against which to judge relative progress in the future. He just never lets his audience doubt where he sees the potential for such progress lying, and in what political movement he places his confidence. Like other Globe history plays, such as No. 1 Hard and Black Powder: Estevan 1931, Medicare! ultimately falls into the "unfinished business of the past" category of history play, in spite of its evident celebration of a successful transition to a more progressive position.

Where 25th Street Theatre and Rex Deverell favour the documentary approach, Ken Mitchell leans towards what Richard Cave recognizes as a "popular dramatic structure for a history play, the character study of an enigmatic individual" (257).[12] Mitchell seeks people whose lives "make good stories because they were full of adventure," and are therefore "suitable for drama" (Hillis, Voices and Visions 200). Many of his major and minor works centre on such figures, and are rooted in but not limited by the details of their lives. In creating his plays, Mitchell does not restrict himself to names, events or words found in the record. Rather, he emphasises, he has increasingly preferred to get at "the truth of character in an imaginative way. . . . By that I mean incorporating dates and events into a vision of the character so that I was no longer concerned with what he did, but who he was and how he affected people" (Hillis 201-02). Mitchell's preference for the "truth of character" over documentable veracity emerges in his "Great Plains trilogy," a group of plays which "attempts to dramatize the greatest mass migration in Canadian history" (The Plainsman, program note, 25th Street Theatre, Saskatoon, 1985): The Plainsman (1985), centering on Gabriel Dumont; Davin: The Politician (1978), focusing on the career of Nicholas Flood Davin; and The Shipbuilder (originally produced in 1978, but, like Davin: The Politician, substantially revised for later productions) based on the obsession of Tom Sukanen.

While all the "Great Plains" plays are set either exclusively or mainly in the prairie West, the particular "West" that each of the main characters of the trilogy inhabits is a markedly different place from that of the others. All the plays deal in one way or another with the price of the opening up and settling of the region, and with the development and defining of the social and cultural mores of the region. Seen in chronological order, rather than in the order they were written, the trilogy begins with The Plainsman, which portrays the end of what Mitchell calls the "aboriginal" culture of the plains, the Metis nation that was "born on the vast Prairie, where two great civilizations--the East and the West--met and merged" (program note, 1985). They are forced from their homelands to make way for settlers. Davin: The Politician focuses on subsequent attempts to establish another, more "civilized" white culture and community, and to fit the ambitions and interests of that community into a "national" political and economic system. The Shipbuilder, finally, is set at the end of the homesteading period, portraying something of the realization of the dream of a new world and a new society, as the settlers' descendants seem to put "community solidarity" ahead of "civilization."

The overall pattern of the trilogy is more mythical than historical. Each step reduces the territory somewhat, or robs it of some potential. What was an Edenic land of plenty to the Metis, a place of natural, unspoiled bounty that Dumont and his wife dream of seeing return, becomes for the settlers and nation builders of Davin: The Politician a "New Eden," a "promised land" where a new kind of society can grow and flourish once the "Old Eden" is tamed and contained. By the end of The Shipbuilder, the Plains are a desertified home to frightened, xenophobic, narrow-minded people trapped in a last frontier that has turned sour. A hypothetical audience--preferably a "Western Canadian" audience--who saw the three performed consecutively would be left with this image of containment and reduction as one standard against which to judge the social and cultural progress and situation of the region in its own time.

Within the context of this pattern of reduction, the three title characters bear two different relationships to the region and its inhabitants. Dumont and Davin (whose "careers" overlap, since The Plainsman covers events of 1884-85, and Davin: The Politician events from 1883 to 1901), represent their respective Wests as insiders. That is, they share the interests with their "constituents, the people who have appointed or elected them to represent and fight for the interests of the "West"--albeit distinctly different visions of that West. Dumont and Davin are only "outsiders" to the respective power structures they confront and battle against--an expansionist, imperialistic Canada for Dumont; Ottawa and the "national dream" of "The East" and the Macdonald Conservatives for Davin. Jaanus is, in contrast, an outsider and a loner in the West, in a play that examines prairie communities and their capacity, or incapacity, for assimilation and tolerance in the face of a capable though unusual "invader." In all cases, the individual qualities of the main characters and their stands serve as standards against which to define and judge the "dominant" or "normal" societies they oppose. If such figures are "outside" the majority or the power structure, what does that say for or about the majority or the powerful?

However, the plays were not written in "historical" order. Studied in the order in which they were first written, their different styles and adherence to historical accuracy demonstrate the evolution of Mitchell's interest in and techniques for creating dramatic characters rather than recreating historical figures. In the first-written of these plays, Davin: The Politician (1978), Mitchell originally adopted a semi-documentary presentation, asking that period photographs, newspaper headlines, and other graphic material be projected onto a screen, claiming in the version as originally published that "anything that will cement the play to 'historical reality' will enhance the dramatic values" (Davin: The Politician (1979) 13). In contrast, recently speaking of later drafts of The Shipbuilder (originally produced in 1978, but substantially revised through later productions), he claims

> I have abandoned the historical figure completely and made him into my character. And I have made my character very different from the original, and much larger, so that I won't be restricted again

> by the requirements of historical accuracy.
> (Hillis 202)

Mitchell escapes the historical "original" partly by renaming his character. The title character has been known variously as Jaanus Koronkola (1978, published in *Canadian Theatre Review* 21, 1979), Jaanus Karhulainen (1985, Persephone Theatre production) and Jaanus Karkulainen (1985 m.s.)--here he will be known only as Jaanus. Finally, in *The Plainsman* (1985), while he uses historical names, he clearly dramatizes conversations and events, since such private occasions from the family life of Gabriel and Madeline Dumont are not likely ever to have found their way into any written record. Furthermore, he subverts or creates alternative explanations for some potentially negative or demeaning details from Gabriel's life, such as his period as a performer in an American "Wild West Show." That is, in *The Plainsman*, Mitchell not only escapes the "handcuffs" of history, he deliberately rewrites it, or creates episodes that have no more historical authenticity than does Schiller's famous--or notorious, depending on the reading--meeting between Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. The test of such episodes, which appear in all three of these plays, is in their aesthetic coherence, their advancement of character and plot, not their reshaping of known history, and it is in terms of their aesthetic coherency, particularly as it relates to the essence of the main character, that these plays become troublesome.

Mitchell believes that "this country needs more heroes" (Conlogue, "Ken Mitchell believes in heroes"), and he tries to recreate his title characters to meet this need. Typically, a Mitchell hero is a "subversive," and he has admitted a preference for "all the people who get written out of Canadian history" (Conlogue). He further describes his essential characters as "eccentric in the sense that they automatically resist being part of a consensus or any kind of conforming society" (Wallace and Zimmerman 147). Mitchell, that is, prefers outsiders, individuals in conflict with a large population or prevailing orthodoxy, people who seem driven to break the mould, or to at least prevent being pressed into it. Just as their resistance makes them heroes, the degree to which they are persecuted or punished for that resistance becomes a measure of the moral worth of that prevailing order. Although it is possible to generalize about what is typical about Mitchell's heroes, it would be a mistake to see them all as essentially the same. Each is also an individual, and the qualities he represents or embodies, or those he combats, are unique to the time, place and events dramatized, just as each play examines issues unique to itself, though frequently related to the general Mitchell theme of resistance. Each "hero" stands against some sort of limiting or confining attitude or behaviour in his particular society. The melodramatic element in these plays most clearly emerges as a tool to characterize what is wrong with the surrounding society or the force that the hero resists. However, Mitchell further wants to avoid making his central characters "martyrs" (Conlogue), and instead seeks to make each tragic, a "great person . . . brought down by a flaw of character, a flaw which is the extremity of his greatest strength," as he says of Nicholas Flood Davin, Norman Bethune and Wu Han, the three central figures in the NeWest Press collection Rebels in Time (xiv). Of the three heroes of the plays in Rebels in Time, only Davin appears in the Great Plains Trilogy, a man whose greatest strength and greatest flaw is, Mitchell claims, his ambition. However, seeking to develop a connection between a hero's strengths and flaws seems a fair assessment of Mitchell's general method for seeking to produce "tragic" heroes. Jaanus's strength and weakness emerge as his independent resourcefulness and his attachment to Old World ways and sentiments. Dumont is more of a problem, not just because he emerges as a survivor, therefore not as a "tragic" figure at all, but because Mitchell tries to construct him as a hero for more than one audience, and for more than one time. As a result, he shifts his definition of Dumont's essential strengths and merits, and, consequently, of his corresponding weaknesses.

Trying to connect the strengths of his "heroes" with their flaws presents Mitchell with a complicated problem: he tries to create his heroes according to two models, the tragic and the melodramatic, within the same play. The problem rests on two issues that emerge from the essential difference between a tragic and a melodramatic hero. The melodramatic hero is "undivided" and consistent (Heilman 86), while the tragic hero is a person divided, someone "caught between different imperatives each of which has its own validity, or that he is split between different forces or motives or values" (89). The tragic hero has something to learn from his dilemma. The melodramatic hero, being "undivided," "greets every situation with an unwavering single impulse which absorbs his whole personality" (Smith 7). Since he represents a single impulse, there is no potential for "growth in personal awareness" (Smith 8). Both may struggle, but the location of the struggle differs significantly: the melodramatic hero seems to struggle against external threats to his integrity, while the tragic struggles internally against equally compelling options. For a character to appear tragically divided, moreover, the internal debate must be over alternatives that must appear equally valid and compelling not just to him but to the audience; the choice must represent a "lose-lose" situation. If one option is clearly morally "right" and the other "wrong," or if one is more "sane" than the other, within the rhetoric of the play, or of the society the play represents, or of the audience for which it is performed, the "division" can hardly appear "tragic." Furthermore, if the "flaw" is essentially an extension of the "strength," then the nature of the character remains, or can appear, consistent, or "undivided." All that changes is the moral implications of the expression of that nature; the "hero" ends up not so much "tragic" as "wrong-headed," while the melodramatic configuration of "right versus wrong" remains. Mitchell gives his heroes both internal and external struggles, but both draw on the same characteristic or nature, in its variant manifestations as strength and weakness. Furthermore, the forces against which they struggle are not of equal merit.

The "two-headed" as opposed to the "two-sided" struggle emerges most clearly in Davin: The Politician, the play that also comes closest to succeeding as tragedy, and that, ironically enough, also stays closest to history. The play was commissioned by Globe Theatre of Regina, for a Regina audience, in one of that city's frequent "anniversary" years. Mitchell chose to celebrate the career of an interesting former resident of the city, someone who had been largely forgotten. For that original audience the conflicts developed, and the vocabulary of the characters, must have sounded at times naggingly familiar. Mitchell gives his audience a chance to reflect on how little things have changed in Canadian politics, and the place of the West within that setting, since the region became part of Canada, in name at least. Mitchell includes such timely (or timeless) issues from Davin's career as how the government in Ottawa puts the interests of the CPR ahead of the interests of western settlers and farmers, the division between federal and provincial rights, the legal and political status of women (Davin introduces a private member's bill calling for women's suffrage twenty years before it was finally granted), and the place of the French language in western Canada (a scene that includes the cliche complaint that the federal government is trying to "shove" French down western throats).

Davin's story, as Mitchell sets it, is in part one of great promise alienated and aggrieved, though in the end the tragedy seems more one of the nation itself, rather than of Davin. Davin (and through him "The West") enters parliament full of energy, enthusiasm, and ambition, expecting to be taken seriously and to exercise influence on the direction of the government and the nation. He has been sent west by the Conservative party, the party of Macdonald and the "national policy," to set up a newspaper in Regina, and to earn a seat in parliament. He sees no difference between the national interest and the territorial or regional interest. As his career goes on, he finds an increasingly greater strain between his loyalty to the region and his loyalty to the party, and eventually makes a choice for the national position over the regional. The potential for tragedy is there, of a man brought down by conflicting and equally admirable choices. However, Mitchell miscalculates, and, rather than giving Davin a choice between his constituents and his party, or his constituents and the nation as a whole, he gives Davin a choice between his drives to serve his constituents and to serve his own selfish ambition for a seat in cabinet. When he gets to Ottawa, Davin finds his access to real power blocked and his ambitions thwarted by the "national policy" and the eastern interests it serves. Davin's sense of grievance at the power brokers who keep him from playing the role he thinks he deserves to play in national affairs is, in the early going, at least, a precursor to the larger sense of western alienation or grievance the West historically has felt about its place in national affairs. His battles with Macdonald and Ottawa, in the public arena, are essentially melodramatic. However, in telling Davin's story, Mitchell encounters difficulty negotiating the ground between chronicling a representative public career and dramatizing a private tragic fall.

Given Canadian parliamentary realities, Davin can remain in parliament only if he continues to serve his constituents' interests; he can advance within the ranks of the caucus, and enter the cabinet, only by serving the interests of the party. As Mitchell develops the conflict, Davin should not try to serve both masters, and Mitchell never leaves his audience in any doubt about which choices Davin "should" have made, or where his loyalties and duties "should" have rested. The moral implications are clear--Davin should have served "the West." He is at his most "attractive" and dynamic when he embodies the West and pursues its interests in Ottawa. As long as he "resists," he is someone with whom a western audience could sympathize. However, because Mitchell creates a Davin whose central ambition turns out after all to be his quest for personal power and recognition, and because Davin cannot realize that ambition simply by "delivering" the West to the party and serving the region's interests aggressively, he compromises and loses, several ways. He loses his appeal to the voters of Regina; he never gains the cabinet posting he covets; and he loses the sympathy of the audience. That is, Davin becomes not so much the pitiable hero of a political tragedy, but, in the end, emerges more the duly-punished villain of a political melodrama. He appears in the end a man destroyed not by what is "false within," but by what emerges as his "undivided" ambition for personal position.

The reasons for this loss of sympathy lie not in the situation itself, but in Mitchell's failure to make the division within Davin convincing. We get little sense of an internal moral struggle going on in Davin. His switch in loyalties comes as little surprise, given the enormous vanity that accompanies his pursuit of public office, and the ties to the Conservative Party he brings west with him. It almost seems that the decision to seek political advancement is more a revelation of the true nature of the man, rather than of an extreme. Davin emerges a hypocrite, rather than a hero.

Mitchell mirrors Davin's public career, his interest in and appeal to the West, in his private courtship and affair with Kate Simpson Hayes. Hayes, in addition to being a poet, also became the first woman journalist in the West, and would herself make an outstanding central character in a feminist regional history play. Here, she embodies the prime virtue that Davin himself defines as necessary for the time and place. In a country in need of poets "to inspire the public imagination" (Rebels in Time 14), she is a published poet, the best of that profession around, and Davin's personal "Muse of Poetry" (24. In the 1979 version she had been the "Muse of Love" 25). Not only does she embody the virtue needed, she might be seen as an embodiment of "The West" itself. Davin's attachment and dedication to her, and hers to him, is one measure of his relationship to his constituents. Hayes, for all of Davin's flowery speech and extravagant claims and proposals, is never a serious distraction from his real loves, politics and public life. Realizing this from the start, Hayes rejects his suits for marriage, for a permanent attachment. She does, however, bear him a daughter--whose "illegitimacy" is a further comment on Davin's public, as well as private, behaviour and decorum. He does not even know of the daughter, so preoccupied is he with things in Ottawa. When Davin makes his real home in the capital, and marries into a prominent Ottawa family, he declares unmistakably his allegiances, and begins to remove himself irreparably from the sympathy of his constituents and the audience.

Mitchell populates The Politician with other models of political behaviour as further mirrors of Davin's dilemma and options. The two most important of these are other Conservatives: Louis Riel and a fictional character known originally as John Thompson, but later renamed Stanley Burroughs, because the real Thompson died in 1884, and Mitchell "needed a political confidant for Davin throughout the play" (Rebels in Time, 7). The two represent extremes of Davin's own situation. Historically, Davin stole into Riel's jail cell in disguise to interview the Metis leader just before his execution. In a dramatization of this interview, Mitchell makes Riel the prophet of Davin's own career, and of the experience of the West in Confederation. Noting that he had himself tried to enter the mainstream of Canadian politics, had in fact been three times elected to parliament, but was prevented by Ontario interests from taking his seat, Riel alerts Davin to the east-west rift that will prove a constant barrier to Davin's ambitions, and the West's. Riel further claims the West needs laws made in the West for the West. His "crime," as he himself explains it, was remaining "[l]oyal to my people and my home" (39). Countering the advice or warnings of the regional loyalist is Burroughs, a cautious, prosaic party loyalist whom Macdonald assigns as Davin's "handler" and mentor. Burroughs has what Davin craves: a Cabinet post, and the ear of the Prime Minister. He also has patience and the capacity to compromise as the party requires. He advises Davin, with a record of past indiscretions, to keep any conflicts with party positions hidden within caucus, and never to raise them in the House.

Davin's potential as a Westerner emerges early, setting him closer to the "Riel" extreme. He even manages to get a few western concerns addressed, notably the "second homesteads" issue. In so doing, however, he makes himself a "rebel" in Macdonald's eyes, and is snubbed when the next cabinet postings are announced. Davin's "sell-out" of the West begins when he sells his newspaper, The Leader, to meet his living expenses in Ottawa, and to "improve [his] position" within the party (85). By the close of the second act, which ends with "Kate's Lament," a poem speaking of separation and loss, and of dreams abandoned, Davin has already decided to compromise himself on the Manitoba Schools Bill, backing the party position in favour of French language rights in the West, a position at odds with Western sentiments on the issue. He is becoming a "Burroughs," ironically enough by backing a position Riel himself would probably have had to back.

It is at this point in particular that Mitchell squanders the historic potential to develop Davin as a tragically divided figure, and a figure whose division speaks of the potentially tragic development for the nation of regionalization within the nation. As Koester makes clear in a chapter entitled "A Matter of Conscience," from his biography, Mr. Davin, M.P., Davin's historical internal debate was not simply between the West and personal ambition, but ranged over several complex issues. Involved were Davin's characteristic stance in favour of provincial rights, and clashes between Western ambitions and the "competing ambitions of eastern Canadians as well, for Ontario wanted to possess the West as its own, while Quebec claimed it as the dual heritage of both French and English" (131). In addition to such "regional" concerns, there was also the issue of promises made when Manitoba entered Confederation. Even if Davin had not chosen to switch his allegiance from provincial rights to speak for a larger, "national" interest, imploring his fellow Members to "vote on this question as patriots, determined to do our best for Canada" (140), Mitchell might have better recreated him as someone driven to such a position. All the interests could have exerted strong, and equally "valid" calls to the dramatic Davin's loyalty, as they did on the historical Davin's. Had Mitchell chosen to dramatize, or to invent if necessary, this internal moral dilemma, to expand on the internal debate to resolve positions that might have been recognizably attractive, or at least equally responsible, to the audience, then what followed in the play as well as in Davin's life, could have taken on a greater tragic dimension.

Instead, in Act Three we see Davin hypocritically invoking the fighting spirit of Riel in his claim to be representing western interests, when he is clearly supporting a law made in the East for the East, not one made in the West for the West. Furthermore, Mitchell continues to tie Davin's parliamentary conduct to his ambition for advancement to the cabinet. This ambition might have been made less damaging to the potentially tragic dimension of the play had Mitchell tied the ambition to Davin's desire to serve the West from a position of power within the government, but he never makes this link. Throughout Act Three, Davin's hypocrisy and his detachment from the West escalate through two election campaigns. Here is a place where Mitchell might have more usefully compressed history, conflating the two into one, although this might have cost him one of the more sensational triumphs from Davin's electoral history, the win by one vote in the 1896 election. One of Mitchell's problems in recreating Davin as a tragic figure is that his life contained moments that, Mitchell himself admits, are nothing less than melodramatic, and the 1886 election is one of them. However, rather than downplay the event, or make it appear less sensational, Mitchell actually compresses time and re-organizes characters to make it more so. As returns come in, Davin trails until the final poll produces a tie. At this point, the returning officer, Walter Scott, a Liberal and the man who will defeat Davin in the next election, but also Davin's friend, casts the vote for Davin. There is, of course, no way that a Liberal would have been the returning officer under a Conservative government and in a Conservative riding, and, indeed, the actual returning officer, Dixie Watson, was a Conservative. Also, historically, the tie did not occur on election night but several days later, after a series of recounts and challenges. The scene gives Davin further opportunity to display his flamboyance and his optimism, but if anyone has to make potentially "tragic" choices, or divide his loyalties at this juncture, it is Scott, not Davin. The scene eventually makes the final election campaign between Davin and Scott more poignant than tragic.

As the final campaign begins, Davin arrives in Regina, so out of touch that he has to be reminded that it is Kate's birthday. He finds that his main rival for office, Scott, is already at the party, and that their mutual friend, Endo

Saunders, has chosen to be Scott's campaign manager. The scenes from the final campaign are a brutal display of how out of touch Davin has become. Scott destroys him by labelling him a man from the past, a holdover from the nationalistic "Age of Confederation," not a man of the future. Here, again, Davin's missing historical attachment to the constitutional agreements made over schools in Manitoba might have added pointed commentary on the changing moral climate (if the "future" means going back on promises) as well as the shifting political situation as the West becomes increasingly aware of its differences from the centre and the "national" interest.

Davin's loss, his exclusion from a list of dignitaries selected to meet visiting royalty, and his rejection by Manitoba Conservative Premier Roblin, all emphasize his fall, and the degree to which he has become an outsider. However, this exclusion can hardly be seen as tragic, as he has earned it, even worked for it, even "courted" it, given his "marriage to Ottawa." His suicide in Winnipeg, while historically accurate, comes as too much of a shock, artistically. Mitchell has not given us enough of the private man to establish suicide as a possible resolution. Davin is not a Roman general, after all, whose position requires such a response to defeat. And there has been no evidence of a strain of melancholia or depression within him. While he has always been excitable, he has never seemed irrational. The suicide effectively draws attention back to the largely unexplored degree to which Davin had depended on public acclaim and affirmation of his worth, rather than coming as the inevitable, or at least possible tragic conclusion of a life that has measured itself in these terms. In melodramatic terms, it comes more as an example of "poetic justice," the price exacted for choosing the wrong course, for putting personal interests ahead of regional. Since Mitchell has made such choices seem more foolish and wrong-headed than "tragic," the suicide seems, aesthetically speaking, a case of melodramatic "overkill." Ironically, while earlier his choice to ignore history, over the Manitoba Schools debate, undermined Mitchell's efforts to set up a sense of tragic catharsis, in the end relying too much on historical fact results in melodramatic "sensationalism."

Perhaps Mitchell tries to establish Davin as a pathetic hero in Frye's "low mimetic mode," but there seems to be a miscalculation here as well. The "root idea of pathos," Frye explains, "is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group to which he is trying to belong" (Anatomy 39). But the group to which Davin seeks to belong is not our group, especially if we are Westerners. He seeks to belong to the group "back East," and to rate his own success in terms of recognition in Ottawa. The pathetic hero of the low mimetic mode supposedly becomes "isolated by a weakness that appeals to our sympathy because it is on our own level of experience" (38). Davin's "ambitiousness" may be on that level, but the focus of that ambition is too clearly something outside our sympathy, something we are too clearly invited to see as wrong-headed, to sustain him as a "hero" whose fate invites our tears.

What might have produced a tragic effect, and one of chilling political overtones, would have been to make Davin a victim of the potentially tragic split that develops between the increasingly alienated region and the "nation" of which it feels less and less a part. Mitchell's note in his introduction to the play in Rebels in Time that it would be easy to see Davin as leader of the current Western Reform Party (9) seems to refer more to the historical figure than to the dramatic character he creates in Davin: The Politician.

For his next play in the trilogy, The Shipbuilder, Mitchell turned away from any documentary theatrical techniques or other attempts or claims to rest his play on historical authenticity, to pursue his ideal of "imaginative truth of character." There are, admittedly, some important similarities between Jaanus and Tom Sukanen, the historical figure upon whom he is based. Both are mechanically resourceful and stubbornly independent, qualities that also emerge in Theatre Passe Muraille's 1975 depiction of Sukanen in The West Show. Mitchell's Jaanus is much more complex and perplexing, however, than Theatre Passe Muraille's Sukanen, whose independent spirit proves self-destructive. Over a series of revisions, Mitchell has consistently moved farther away from the historical facts and specific details of Sukanen's life and character to build a story of conflict between a population who wants to forget its past as it homogenizes itself into a "community," and an eccentric but capable outsider, a man who finally cannot escape his past.

Perhaps because he centres the conflict between Jaanus and the town, Mitchell seems at times to be writing a reply, or a corrective, to plays like Paper Wheat, which celebrate and mythologize the "characteristic" co-operative spirit and attachment to region of prairie farmers. The Shipbuilder is increasingly set in an atmosphere of suspicion and selfishness. Furthermore, a major shift in the story from the earliest published version, from Canadian Theatre Review, January 1979, to later versions, takes place in the sense of attachment to the region by "established" residents. Originally, Mitchell had Betsy Krok, Jaanus's sister-in-law, complain about how when she and her husband, Joki, came to the district, "it was 1930, and all the best farm land was taken, so we just had to stay and tough it out" (78). These were not people celebrating a chance to work for their dreams in the "last best west." These were people coping with such timeless prairie realities as marginal land, farm debt, and economics of scale--issues of farm economics that would have been as familiar to a prairie audience as were Davin's political issues in The Politician. The claims to residency and "establishment" of people like Betsy and Joki were only slightly less tenuous than Jaanus's. By 1985, for a production at Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre, Mitchell adds an extra level of irony. The best land is already gone when Jaanus arrives, as before; however, Jukka and Betsy have inherited a farm from her father, the original settler. The land already has become a posterity, and "established" families build and solidify their "community" more by coercion and intimidation than by co-operation and invitation. Jukka finds the past a weight as he struggles to "fit in," going so far as to change his family name to "Crook," so that (ironically enough) it sounds less "foreign" in a district that has come to resent immigrants only one generation after its own parents arrived as immigrants themselves. The past is an embarrassment, so they resent and persecute anyone who reminds them of their own past, or who challenges what has already become orthodoxy, the "right" way to behave and do things "out here." Their small-mindedness and intolerance is a major measure of their "villainy," so much so that when Sholer, the town's major businessman (and sometimes political candidate) complains that Jaanus "Never comes to town. Doesn't drink! Can't tell me that's normal" (57), an audience can only reflect "Lucky for him."

Jaanus does things his own way from the start, refusing to fall into the traps and practices that have made life less than comfortable and profitable for the other residents. Where they run up bills at local stores, he makes do. Where they hire a large threshing machine and crew each year, he builds his own thresher, and operates it with the help of one man--and he makes money doing so. Jaanus's independent, self-reliant life is a viable alternative, but one that the others have already given up on. All he earns is suspicion, jealousy, and the enmity of the region's only other threshing machine operator.

Jaanus has another characteristic that marks him not only as different from the rest in this play, but from the main "positive" characters of many other Canadian historical plays--particuarly from Reaney's James and Judith Donnelly. Jaanus brings with him old world attitudes and practices that deserve to take root in the new. After the insulting treatment he receives from his frightened sister-in-law, Jaanus reminds Jukka that back in Finland, even "the dirtiest tinker would have been welcomed" (27), not turned away and refused hospitality. Jukka's reply, "This isn't Finland," invites an ironic "No, unfortunately" from the audience. His old world ways also contribute to Jaanus's success as a farmer in the new. He refuses to listen to the well-meant advice of his neighbour, Larry Bender, that it is too early to plant a crop in Saskatchewan. Jaanus only knows that the moon is right, and plants according to older traditions. When Bender, another late-comer who becomes Jaanus's only friend and supporter in the district, follows suit, they both bring in superior crops in a year when all others fail. This beneficial relationship between the "outsiders" establishes the potential good that Jaanus could bring the district.

Jaanus's success continues even into the drought of the 1930s, but rather than adopt his methods, the others can only rumble about how it is "not fair" that he has money to "waste" on some lunatic dream of building a ship while "everybody else in the district's broke" (55). Apparently it is bad manners in this West to succeed on your own terms, rather than to share stubbornly in the ambient social anxiety. "Our way of doing things," Mitchell demonstrates, can become regressive and confining as easily as progressive and liberating.

Mitchell does not, however, divide the right and wrong between old and new, but between successful and unsuccessful, between sensible and senseless, and between generous and spiteful. Unfortunately for Jaanus, his ties with the old world are not all equally beneficial for him. His past is also a curse, and, ironically, he had not come to the district for positive reasons, but as part of a life-long wandering in exile. Jaanus has always had trouble fitting in, and he seems always to have been the target of small town rumour-mongering, so that his story takes on an Ibsen-like quality or tone at times. In a cleverly and effectively matched pair of scenes in Act Two, Mitchell has the "chorus" of Saskatchewan residents serve also as the voices of Suomi, Jaanus's home town, linking the old and new world through their "traditional" habits of twisting information and of malicious gossip.

If Jaanus's success as a farmer is an ironic test of the community's flexibility, his pursuit of his dream to return to Finland is a test of the district's tolerance, a test it also fails miserably. Act Two opens with a chorus of objections, framed largely in religious images and terms, complaining of the blasphemy of wasting time, scorning the building of a new "Noah's Ark," and remarking on the red, possibly satanic forges--all leading up to the acknowledgement that Jaanus stops every Sunday. However, Jaanus does not go to the town's church, so the town piously conflates public and divine will, twisting Jaanus's private observations into spitefulness at the town and a mocking of God.

Bender, who is the only representative of the generous, accepting, adaptable farmer so typical of other Western plays, is also the only one to admire Jaanus for his ability to live for and to pursue a dream--just as must everyone else who has tried to make a living as a farmer on the plains. He tries to make the others see that Jaanus is like them in this, at least. Unfortunately for the play, and its "shipbuilding as dream-building" metaphor, neither Bender nor Mitchell adjusts for the fact that Jaanus's dream is a dream of leaving, not of remaining. His plan to return to the land of his youth is out of line with dreams of settlement and of making a go in a new land, and as such easily deserves to be seen as a public affront. The only surprise, given the dissatisfaction most others seem to feel for the life they find themselves trapped within is that they do not try to join him in escape. Mitchell goes one step farther astray when he lets Jaanus's dream become, or appear, disruptive to Bender's own dream, as Bender seems to jeopardize his own farm and family to work with Jaanus on the ship.

Ultimately the essential problem emerges: Jaanus goes beyond being a dreamer to become someone who is clearly insane. Jaanus is, after all, visibly obsessed in a play that could have become an investigation into the long-term effects of exile and rootlessness. Even his dream to return to the land of his youth is a dream to return to a place that has already spurned him and that we must suspect will hold no promise for him. Furthermore, an audience, particularly a prairie audience, must feel at least a touch of sympathy for Sholer's question, "You don't see nothing funny about a man building a ship in the middle of a goddam desert?" (67), even given the fact that Sholer is otherwise a jealous, mean-spirited ringleader in the xenophobic assault on Jaanus. Of course, while this play was first performed in Regina, and has since also been performed in Saskatoon, it was not necessarily first created for a specific Saskatchewan occasion or audience, the way The Politician and The Plainsman were, so Mitchell's "ideal" or target audience remains more ambiguous and amorphous here.

It may be, indeed, that Mitchell sets out in this play to test any audience's tolerance levels for eccentricity. While it may be asking a lot to expect an audience, particularly a prairie audience, to buy in with Bender into Jaanus's dream, it should never be able to accept the way Jaanus is treated. More in line with history, on this one point, than was Passe Muraille, Mitchell has Jaanus committed to the provincial mental hospital, just as was Sukanen. Mitchell tries to make Jaanus's incarceration the final act of malice on the part of the town, a move to protect the reputation of the district, and a clear rejection of Jaanus's right to dream and to dare to be different. In his unsentimental and unsympathetic depiction of Jaanus's neighbours, his tormentors, Mitchell refuses to buy into any myths of small-town co-operation and friendliness. Clearly, Mitchell calls for a more generous, tolerant social climate, one that will accommodate difference and individuality. The problem an audience has to resolve, however, is the fact that Jaanus is mad, and probably does need to be taken care of. It is not Jaanus who emerges in a "lose-lose" situation, but the audience: we are damned as intolerant bigots if we side with the town, deluded--perhaps even self-destructively so--if we buy in with Bender and side with Jaanus.

Jaanus' story appears to look for its tragic potential within Frye's "ironic" mode. Jaanus is a scapegoat for the town's frustrations, "punished" beyond any "crime" or indiscretion he has committed in building the boat. Yet, Frye, also maintains, "whatever happens to the hero should be causally out of line with his character" (Anatomy 41). The problem in Jaanus' case always comes back to his essential madness and delusion. Why the town acts as it does may be wrong, but the fact is Jaanus' madness does play a causal role in his fate. Ultimately, while Mitchell can clearly garner sympathy for Jaanus, as for Davin, for what each stands against, he undermines his tragic potential because of what he stands for. Janus and Davin emerge not models of responsible social behaviour and action but victims of their own inappropriate pursuit of wrong-headed goals.

At the close of The Shipbuilder, Mitchell seems to want to leave his audience to ponder the moral as well as the financial impoverishment of the plains region and its residents at the close of the wave of immigration that had begun a half-century and a dramatic trilogy earlier. History, at least in the 1930s, had yet to restore the spirit of Gabriel Dumont, at least not the spirit of some vaguely defined "goodness" he supposedly embodies at the close of The Plainsman. This last-written of the trilogy was created to correspond with "celebrations," or tourist promotions, marking the hundredth anniversary of the North West Rebellion of 1885--a rebellion where the ancestors of one part of Saskatchewan's population defeated the ancestors of another part of that population. Just exactly how the descendants of the losing side of the rebellion were to fit into the 1985 celebrations remained a sore point all through the year, and, evidently, created one of several problems for Mitchell with this play, as well.

The Plainsman is a two-act play, the first set at Dumont's home in October, 1884, the autumn before the North-West Rebellion, the second in a cabin in Montana on November 18, 1885, with Gabriel and his wife in exile following the failure of the rebellion. Within these two short acts, which seem at times to come together more as two related one-act plays rather than as a coherent major work, Mitchell seeks to model Dumont as a hero for two different audiences, the white and the Metis, as well as for two different stages in Metis history: the period of freedom as the nation of St. Laurent, and the period following the defeat of that nation at Batoche--a period extending into the present. In addition Mitchell addresses such issues as the positive and negative roles of history and historical memory in the lives of a people, and the positive and negative roles of myth, both social and spiritual. Within and between acts, the play is a tangle of shifting perspectives and attitudes, the most important of which involve focus on the heroic nature of the protagonist; the symbolic relationship of Dumont to the land, its "spirit" and its people, and, overall, the audience for whom the play is written. In the end, the play is too short to address succesfully or even to contain so ambitious a range of ideas and objectives, giving rise to complaints such as Ray Conlogue's after the original production at Saskatoon's 25th Street Theatre in 1985 that the play "can't hang together until there is a clear idea of what the characters are after" ("Shipbuilder plies. . ."), a comment that reflects the confusing effect of changing Gabriel's heroic qualities in mid-play.

For much of the first act, it is not clear that Gabriel Dumont is the focus of the play. At first, Madeline Dumont seems the potential hero of this piece, since she clearly and powerfully speaks for the Metis people and their needs in the face of Canadian encroachment onto the plains. However, Madeline becomes the voice for one set of choices facing Gabriel, while Charles Nolin, the elected President of the Metis nation, offers the other. Some of the inconsistency of character focus emerges in Madeline's confrontation with Nolin. Madeline insists that Gabriel and the others observe the traditions and rituals of the people, in effect remain true to their culture and way of life. However, she is also the voice for adaptation to changing conditions, the one who wants Gabriel to settle down. Nolin, who is a particular target of Madeline's insistence on observing the forms, speaks for confrontation--though he looks to the threat rather than the reality of violence as his best bargaining ploy against Ottawa. By the end of the play, Mitchell lets Gabriel make both choices and take both sides, and has attempted to make him seem heroic both times. However, we see only the disastrous result of his first choice, to side with Nolin and Riel, as Act Two dramatizes the effects of Gabriel's choice on the Metis, as reflected in the consequences to the Dumont family, particularly to Madeline, who lies ill and near death in exile. The long-term "rightness" of his second choice is implied rather than demonstrated. Indeed, it remains a piece of "unfinished business" left for the present to resolve by integrating the decendants of Dumont into the "mainstream," with dignity and the property rights the rebellion was largely about in the first place.

The intent to define Dumont as a representative man of the Metis people and as an embodiment of the best of the old way of life soon becomes apparent. Other characters, Madeline and family friend Michel Dumas especially, note that Gabriel is steady as a rock (5), practical and a survivor (6), and a man of action (18) who is even more stubborn than the buffalo he hunts (19). Although he cannot read, he can speak seven languages and can "read" the plains environment with ease. He further emerges as a "man of the people" (17) in his willingness to observe traditions, as when he retells the story of how he earned his rifle. The story, the insistence of Madeline and of the family friend, Michel Dumas that he tell it once again, and their reaction to it, all help to establish his particular brand of courage as a fighter, and how it has long been valued and recognized as a source of his stature in their eyes.

By contrast, Nolin--the elected but by no means "popular" choice for president-- seems to have none of these qualities, which is why he needs Gabriel's co-operation. As Nolin affirms, Gabriel is the popular leader, and the "people wait to see what you'll do. That's why you have to go with us" (17). Nolin is a man of words, but one who neglects to tell a story or sing a song, as tradition requires, before setting out with Gabriel to bring back Riel. When Madeline insists that Nolin observe the rituals, he can croak only a few lines before apologising for his lack of talent. He has, of course, missed the issue: it has been his fitness as a representative, not his talent, that has been on trial, and he failed that test before he sang a word. His failure is evident in Madeline's ironic "I am answered" (22) when Nolin asks if she is satisfied. Gabriel and Nolin are also contrasted by their ability to handle Hudson's Bay rum, and by their appearance: Gabriel in a plainsman's hat and Metis sash, Nolin in a white shirt and overcoat. Clearly, any choice to follow Nolin's lead is a poor choice for Gabriel and the Metis.

Yet Nolin is the one who seems to have a clearer sense of the "historic moment" as "All Europe is marching toward the prairie. We can't stop them any more than the buffalo could" (21). Nolin sees that power in the "new world" (19) emerging around them will be the power of land and numbers, not of guns. Gabriel by comparison seems naive when he suggests that the Metis' best bet is to stay put. Perhaps his belief that they can establish their claims if they just refuse to leave is a reflection of Madeline's influence, though this is not clear, especially as his plan is to stay and confront, not stay and adapt: he plans to shoot any government agent who tries to put him off his land. Not only is this rash, it hardly meets Madeline's preference for peaceful adaptation and compromise.

Just who is a fit role model for the Metis, and at what stage of their history, or even of the play, is especially problematic because, throughout Act One, Mitchell brings in the issue of history as a source of cultural role models as his characters search Metis history. Most glorify the victories of the past, such as at Seven Oaks. Madeline, of course, rejects such models, which puts her into a compromised position, as the voice of tradition, and the one who calls for stories and songs, only to find the ones she gets inappropriate to her preferred manner of dealing with the present crisis. She affirms her own choice, as she herself breaks with tradition to send Gabriel off with a song rather than with her usual dance. Ironically, perhaps dramatically inappropriately, although she fears Riel and what his return could lead to, she sings Riel's song of "a maid of the small Metis nation." The song speaks of the singer's "great pride in the heritage I share" (22), and of the "great role" the people have played in the land. Madeline uses the song as a distraction to try to assassinate Nolin, since her instincts and premonitory dreams have told her Nolin's way can only lead to violence. History, of course, has since proven "her" right in this, though without necessarily making her choice of adaptation at that time appear equally as "right." Nothing in the play or in history suggests that the Canadian government would have been any more willing to address, or any more expedient in addressing, Metis land claims without a rebellion.

What Gabriel and Nolin (and, we are told, Riel) seek is at best the "honourable" choice, though Madeline closes Act One by reminding Nolin where the pursuit of dignity leads, to a life like the one Riel has been living, "rotting in exile" in a shack in Montana (23). Montana is precisely where Madeline and Gabriel are found in Act Two, as Madeline suffers from a case of consumption, her lungs rotting away from within. And dignity is the objective Madeline ends up telling Gabriel he must strive to personify and preserve for the defeated Metis. Act Two parallels several of the situations of Act One, even offering some analogous choices. Gabriel is once again preparing to leave Madeline to ride off for Riel, this time to rescue him from execution in Regina. Michel brings in an offer from the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show to hire Gabriel as a circus attraction. Michel argues that since Gabriel is "a big hero down here" (31) (a nudge from Mitchell to his Canadian audience of a century later to consider Gabriel's status "back home"), he could use his position to lobby Washington and maybe even Europe to help free Riel. That is, Gabriel is once again to try to build a negotiating power base, and to secure allies for the cause. Ironically, the scene is set on Nov. 18, 1885, the day after Riel was hanged in Regina, adding poignancy (for the historically literate) to the scene. With Riel dead, of course, there would be no political advantage for Gabriel to join the show, yet, historically, he did. Mitchell sets out to save Gabriel's dramatic dignity, attempting to cover any potential shame that might accompany his career as a "circus side-show," by having

Michel take the job for him, but using Dumont's costume and name. The intent seems to be to preserve the heroic potential of Gabriel by rewriting, or, in this case, denying, history.

Several of Gabriel's functions and responsibilities in this second act differ significantly from those he had in the first. He no longer meets the needs of a people planning resistance, but those of a people trying to recuperate after a shattering defeat. He doctors the consumptive Madeline, and his solicitous behaviour towards her sets a model for heroism in a new context. He is a restorer, rather than a conserver or preserver, even if his behaviour rests in part on his feelings of guilt, arising from his acknowledgement that Madeline had been right a year earlier. Mitchell now has Madeline change her position and tell Gabriel that he was right to resist, since "that's your strength" (27). But then, as a choric character who has to express the sympathies of the Metis nation, she voices many contradictory positions as this scene progresses. The turns of logic she executes seem calculated to let Gabriel remain "true" to his character and to validate his historical choice and action, yet also to give him a new "dramatic" choice and action that will adapt him to a heroic role in the the future, the audience's present. As Madeline says, Gabriel will "keep the struggle going," the struggle not for survival, or for political status and recognition, but the "struggle for dignity" (37). This appears to be the focus of the dramatisation in Act Two, as the "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" connections suggest, to build or preserve Dumont's dignity.

By the end of the play, Mitchell does not just have Gabriel perform an about-face to march to the tune of Madeline's "song" of adaptation, the tune he had rejected earlier, he has Gabriel view his fate as some sort of providential test of Job-like proportions. Gabriel's choices become unmistakably moral, rather than social or political, or even "historic." Gabriel has lost virtually all of his material goods, and is in danger of losing his wife, but in a concluding scene where he symbolically "goes slowly towards Madeline" (44) and finally joins her on the bed, he accepts all this as "right" and submits to his sense of some guiding holy will, the will of "the Old Man," the buffalo (44).

This brings back into play the image of the buffalo, an animal whose essence has itself been symbolically problematic throughout. In the first act, the buffalo's weaknesses parallel the Metis', at least to Gabriel. He says the Metis would be stronger if they were more stubborn, and did not stampede, like the buffalo, at the first shot. Gabriel seems to prefer the muskox as a cultural or military model, saying the Metis would be better off to stand and fight--which at Riel's insistence they eventually do at

Batoche, with fatal results. In the second act, Gabriel spits his contempt for the very tactic he seems to suggest in the first: "We could've cut them down on the plains, like cattle. But we waited for them to reach Batoche and shell our families" (36). While he may well lament the price of the tactic, foresight, not hindsight, would seem a more heroic virtue for Mitchell to strive for. Mitchell here again seems to encounter trouble remaking Gabriel, as he tries to account for actions that harmed the Metis in 1885--not that, historically, they ever had much real chance against the superior numbers and technology of Canada--while at the same time he tries to set him up as a model for 1985.

In the second act, the buffalo becomes a model of strength and "goodness" (44). In this final scene, Madeline (drugged on pain medicine, therefore possibly hallucinating, not having premonitory dreams as she had before Act I) dreams of a time when the buffalo will again cover the plains, while Gabriel adds his vision that their "goodness" will again be the power at large on the prairie. This concluding image of and reference to the buffalo and its spirit is part of a hopeful, though strained, "Golden Age"[13] vision of an Edenic future, modeled on a vision of the plenty of the past.

If there is a tragic figure here at all, it is not Gabriel but Madeline. She, after all, lies on the brink of death--may even in fact die (in the original performance, as in the script, this remained ambiguous)--while Gabriel speaks of returning to his home to rebuild the cabin the Canadian militia destroyed. The symbolism here suggests the rebuilding not just of the house itself, but the community that surrounded it. Echoing what he said in the first act, when he threatened to shoot any Canadian government representative, "They're not going to run Dumont from his home" (43). In the end, Gabriel sounds more like the spiritual descendant of the Romantic poet Shelley than of Job. He promises to make a new start tomorrow, after the blizzard passes--the blizzard symbolizing in a conventional way the turmoil and disorder in his life, and in that of the people he symbolizes. He concludes: "After the first blizzard, can spring be far away?" (44).

In this decision to return, whose hero is Dumont supposed to be, and in what way is he supposed to be heroic--as one who resists or as one who adapts; as one who resists by adapting; or as one who submits to a higher order? Is he a "leader," a "high mimetic" hero, setting an example of dignity for others to follow; is he a "man of the people," a "low mimetic" hero sharing their plight; or is he an ironic "pharmakos," which his Job-like sufferings suggest, someone who merely submits to a higher will than his own? As Frye explains of Job's predicament, he "can defend himself against the charge of having done something that makes his catastrophe morally intelligible; but the success of his defence makes it morally unintelligible" (42). Dumont finally choses to view his fate, and that of the Metis, as part of the holy will of the "Old Man," part of a providential plan that will become clear in the fulness of time. There is, then, no historical "right" or "wrong" here. Yet, clearly, Mitchell also wants some audience to say, "Yes, Gabriel's choice and actions in the end are right--for him and for us. They offer a way out"--not just a convenient excuse for inactivity.

Throughout this trilogy, the Great Plains has appeared as a region of shifting anxieties. First came the Metis, anxious about their survival in a changing economic and political environment. Then came the first settlers and their representative, anxious to create a new society and to take their place on the national scene. Finally there emerged a settled society anxious to hide its roots and worried about its very survival in the face of a hostile physical environment. Dumont and Davin are "insiders" who serve as models of how Plains people have failed to deal effectively with their anxieties, while Jaanus is an "outsider" who serves as a convenient focus, a scapegoat, for the frustrations and anxieties that "progress" have brought about. Through the fates of his "heroes," in plays that on the whole seem more to serve as lessons about the price of resistance than about its value, Mitchell seems more intent on warning his audiences about attachments that can limit their potential in the present and for the future, but even here he is inconsistent.

In The Plainsman, Dumont resists Madeline at first, only to agree later--too late to save her or the people she represents--to try to adapt to a new order. But his "adaptation" is a sentimentally idealistic wait for an imprecisely defined old order to return. In Davin: The Politician, Mitchell appears to want to warn his prairie audience of the seductive power of "the East," but his Davin was seduced by power, and loyal to the Conservative Party, before he arrived in Regina. Was he ever a "representative" Westerner, for all his enthusiasm? "Resistance" never actually works for Davin, here, but, then, neither does "adaptation." Still, in Davin: The Politician Mitchell does offer his audience some viable choices. In the end, Kate finds a productive place for herself in the West, and Scott replaces Davin, promising to go into the future, rather than to tie himself to the past. In The Shipbuilder, Mitchell seems to offer his audience the choice between self-serving exclusivity or joining in eccentric madness. Jaanus might usefully have reminded his neighbours of the positive potential in not throwing over old ways and old ideas by tying themselves too inescapably to "the new way," the "way we do things out here." However, in the end Jaanus destroys himself and undoes the good he does his one friend, to pursue an old delusion. It is hard not to sympathize with his "persecutors's" actions in having him committed for insanity, even if we can reject some of their reasoning and motives as cruel and vindictive, of searching for a scapegoat for their own frustration and anxiety for their present and future.

As a "hero," each protagonist somehow falls short. Davin and Jaanus fail to measure up as models for ideals, given that their specific aspirations are in some measure responsible for their downfalls. They cannot be seen as tragic victims of circumstances that forced them to choose between equally viable yet potentially destructive options. Finally, each somehow fails to operate quite within the model of the tragic "mode" (as defined by Frye) most nearly approximating his dramatic situation. Dumont, as a survivor, is hardly "tragic," but, then, Mitchell is also not consistent about the realm of action within which he may be seen as heroic, either. Rather than their relative documentable closeness to or imaginative distance from their respective historical "originals," their shortcomings as coherent heroes, tragic or otherwise, in the end become the critical issue with these figures. As individuals in the "West" that is Saskatchewan, they emerge not so much "enigmatic" as problematically unfocused in their relationships to the audience and their claims on the audience's sympathies.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Donnelly "region" of Canada

The plays in the previous chapter were written in Saskatchewan and, arguably, largely intended for a Saskatchewan audience (though both Paper Wheat, which has gone on to national prominence, and The Shipbuilder, which has has some international success, have demonstrated appeal beyond the "local"). "Regional" events need not necessarily be dramatized for "local" consumption, however, nor need they be designed to create a sense of region or to take their place within the "regional" literature (however defined) of a particular place. It is possible to treat the local as a metaphor (or a metonymy) for the national or even of the universal. Such seems to have been the case among the spate of plays that emerged between 1973 and 1975 based on the history and legends of the notorious Donnelly family of Biddulph township in southwestern Ontario. In November 1973, Herbert Whittaker counted eight Donnelly plays either in existence or in production ("The Black Donnellys are riding hard again"). This chapter considers three of these treatments: Peter Colley's The Donnellys, first produced by Theatre London, in April 1974; Theatre Passe Muraille's collective, Them Donnellys, first produced in 1973, revised by a different collective in 1974 (a transcript of which version serves as the basis of the reading which follows), and eventually edited and published in 1979 by Ted Johns as The Death of the Donnellys; and James Reaney's Donnelly trilogy (Sticks and Stones, 1973; St. Nicholas Hotel, 1974, and Handcuffs, 1975), all first produced by Tarragon Theatre of Toronto and later toured by the NDWT Company.

All of these plays enjoyed popular success in southwestern Ontario, and inasmuch as they "focus upon a distinctive experience" that is, for a southwestern Ontario audience at least, they are part of a "regional" literature. The Theatre Passe Muraille version, in particular, is an example of that theatre's practice of making theatre from the myths and legends of a region, a practice that resulted, for example, in The West Show. Yet although all are set in the same locale, and rest on the same particularly prominent and sensational tale of local violence, they do not seem to be as intent as the "Saskatchewan" plays in confronting a local audience with local "exemplary" actions or reactions, or with events or individuals whose experience defines the region. In particular, they do not pit this region against another, or against "the centre" the way the Saskatchewan plays tend to. The Colley play takes a more "universal," or "international" perspective, placing the Donnelly experience within the context of "Old World' sectarian violence; the Theatre Passe Muraille version looks to the past for an example of current general sociological problems; and the Reaney plays are an attempt to formulate a better "national" myth for Canada. Still, the local appeal is evident in the box-office records for the three treatments. Colley's "turned out to be the most successful play in the theatre's seventy-year history" (Colley A3); the 1973 Passe Muraille collective "played to capacity audiences" (Graham), and the Reaney trilogy surpassed them all by going on a successful national tour in 1975--although audience figures in Reaney's account of that tour, 14 Barrels from Sea to Sea, show that the trilogy did not always attract large to capacity audiences in more distant regions of the country.[14]

The Donnelly plays are a Canadian rarity in that, unlike many other plays that rescue (or claim to rescue) events or individuals from obscurity, they dramatize a "known" event. The Donnellys' is a tale of violence that had long since become, in Whittaker's words, "the province's most favoured folk-legend" ("The Black Donnellys"). The Donnellys had even achieved some national prominence through three popular histories: The Black Donnellys (1954), and Vengeance of the Black Donnellys (1962), by Thomas P. Kelley, and The Donnellys Must Die (1962), by Orlo Miller. Kelley and Miller differ markedly in their readings of the events. Kelley's lurid and sensational earlier book paints the Donnellys as figures of unremitting evil and violence, five of whom were killed by a mob of vigilantes in 1880. No one was ever convicted of these killings, even though an eye witness was available. The lack of a conviction can be, and has been, seen and presented as an indictment either of the Donnellys (who got the justice they deserved) or of the town (who compounded the crime by not pursuing justice). In his second book, Kelley tells of the supposed retribution exacted by the ghosts of the Donnellys on their killers. Miller locates the origin of the violence that is forever associated with the Donnelly story in sectarian political activities back in the Donnellys' home, County Tipperary, Ireland. James Donnelly, the father, took his family to Canada to escape having to become party to the Irish violence, or a victim of it. As Miller shows, and both Colley and Reaney emphasize in their treatments, by grim irony, the Donnellys moved into a region of Canada where the religious tensions and antagonisms of Ireland had taken root in the "New" World.

Since it is unusual in Canada for more than one historical play to cover the "same" material--whether known or "unknown"--or for more than one treatment of the same source material to be in production at any time, the Donnelly plays represent a rare opportunity to study and compare "readings" of the "same" event, dramatized from different perspectives. The three dramatizations are all essentially stories of transgression and retribution, but they vary significantly on how much of the story they choose to tell and how long a period to cover; on what they see as the nature of the transgression; and in the attitudes they display towards the Donnellys, their reputation and capacity for violence. While Colley and Reaney try to play down and even, in Reaney's case, largely to deny the violence attributed to the Donnellys, especially by Kelley, Theatre Passe Muraille looks for the source of Donnelly violence, and explores the impact of that violence on the family and the community. None of the three tries to justify the killing of the five family members, but each seeks to explain or at least to examine the source of the fear and hate that led to the murders.

All three use presentational, documentary performance styles, though not, in Colley's case, documentary techniques of authentication. Colley uses events and words "taken directly from newspaper and court records of the time" (A5), but does not make it clear when this happens. For example, the court testimony that cuts into the action, or that sets up dramatic scenes re-enacting the evidence, seems to use words from the transcripts of the trial of the alleged murders, but there is nothing consistent in the tone or vocabulary that would date the language to the particular era, in what Colley acknowledges is not the "exact truth; simply a dramatic representation of the way it may have occurred, using as much of the available information as possible" (A5). The use of multiple casting, a common enough documentary anti-mimetic technique for breaking down the illusion of reality, to say "this is not the 'real' story but an investigation into it and a retelling of it," and a technique used by both Theatre Passe Muraille and Reaney, seems in the Colley play more a means of cutting down on the size of the cast necessary to produce the show. The Reaney plays, in addition to using individual actors for a variety or roles, use individual props to serve a variety of functions, thereby establishing important stage metaphors to further his overtly mythopoeic treatment, while giving it a "documentary" basis in fact.

Colley's The Donnellys, the least complex of the three, is a fairly straightforward telling. Colley leans heavily towards the Miller version of events, tying the murders back to "three hundred years of hate" in Ireland (A9). He seems further to want to show that the Donnelly story links violence in nineteenth century Canada with the same antagonisms that lay behind the sectarian violence that had flared again in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He begins with the business of "the troubles," introducing the question first as an Irish / English antagonism that later evolves into an Irish / Irish antagonism. Then, having established that the Irish troubles are at the root of the Donnelly murders, as part of his attempt to redeem the Donnelly reputation, he later has Jim Donnelly, the father, ask altogether too disingenuously, "Why are they using us like this?" (A78). Such thematic coyness and rhetorical self-contradiction is an ongoing problem of the play, as is Colley's use of stock characterizations, such as his "stagy," if not "stage" Irishmen. Characters such as the narrator, Tim Mulligan, an "eternally drunk Irishman," Pat Farrell, a "thick-set Irish troublemaker," and the "slow witted" Purtell, and a whole array of other belligerent, stubborn bullies, seem to have been around the English stage forever. Similarly, Colley characterizes Aemilius Irving, Q.C., who "plays all of the judges throughout the play," as "a typical stiff representation of justice" (A6, emphasis added). Colley, an Englishman trained in England, seems more comfortable with the conventions of his home theatre, and with characters who can be reduced to familiar types.

Just as his treatment seems to prefer representing the story as just another example of "typical" Irish internecine feuding, rather than seeking to re-examine the Donnelly legend as a vehicle for developing new Canadian themes, his use of stock types does little to identify or develop Canadian themes or accents. The language is a curious and at times irritating mix of stylized stage Irish, contemporary vulgar idiom, and highly lyrical outbursts. The first is probably part of Colley's overall view of this as part of the larger "Irish" question, while the second seems part of an attempt to connect the kind of event in the past with similar kinds of events in the present. For example, when Jim Donnelly first throws Farrell off his land, Will Donnelly calls his brothers to watch with "Hey . . . Dad's going to beat the piss out of someone" (A30), characterizing the boy, in a colloquial idiom very much in vogue in the present, as someone who enjoys violence as a member of a Donnelly family who traditionally seems to seek violence this way, for entertainment. Mrs. Donnelly even encourages such an attitude. She has already called the boys herself to "come see your father have some fun." Yet this same Mrs. Donnelly, only a few moments later, tries to prevent a further fight between Farrell and her husband. And immediately after that, when she reacts to the fact that her husband has just killed Farrell in a drunken brawl, her language and sensibilities are on a different plane entirely:

> It was morning again. A single bird was singing, unseen. The early sun threw a handful of diamonds on the wet grass, and blood on the clouds at the edge of the day. Farrell's blood. . . . He'd remember that dream, that same dream frozen cold. A handspike frozen in his fist, a white finger pointing into the darkness. (A 34)

Colley is apparently trying to create the effect of heightened emotion, and of a significant turning point, but there is something inescapably false about such moments, since he has not previously established Mrs. Donnelly as the kind of person capable of such flights, unless we fall for the unspoken cliche that all the Irish have a bit of the poet in their souls.

Colley takes his story through a farce of a trial that revolves around a "saw nothing," "heard nothing," "know nothing" pattern of denial and cover up that leads inevitably to a verdict of "Not Guilty." The trial also flashes back to a hypocritical funeral oration by Father Connolly, whose anti-Donnelly sermons had apparently lent moral support to the vigilante cause, but who later claims he "never meant it to be like this" (A 104). By this time, Colley has established the Donnellys more as victims than aggressors. He then ends the play with a song that introduces the idea that the Donnellys' story has "only just begun" to enter the realm of legend, and to become one of the cautionary tales grandparents whisper to children "amid a winter's gale" (A 106). The song ends with what in the circumstances is a rhetorically self-defeating line: "And the truth of all that happened / I guess we'll never know" (A 106), which does not so much advance the idea that this is more properly the stuff of legend as suggest that the play is of dubious historical merit.

While it has admitted appeal as an entertainment, Colley's version is disappointingly thin either as history or as story telling, especially when held up against the other versions, with their more overtly mythopoeic interests--interests that begin with the mythical to legendary status of event, rather than end with it. The differences between Colley's version and the two mythical approaches, and again, between the two mythical approaches themselves, are evident in their respective handlings of the fight that sends the father to jail. Where Colley simply shows a more or less "realistic" fight that was clearly the result of Irish sectarian hatred, both Theatre Passe Muraille and Reaney present two versions of this incident to separate the "legendary" or "mythical" Black Donnellys from more "realistic" versions.

The opening scene of Them Donnelly's, at a barn-raising, presents a "realistic" depiction of the fight. The two combatants tread warily but angrily about each other all through a barn-dance sequence played with all the house lights up. There is no clear reason given for their mutual dislike, but finally, Donnelly orders Farrell off his land and clubs him. This first act of violence, then, seems to stem from a specific decision to deny access to Donnelly land, or to protect Donnelly property and interests against outsiders, and establishes the ambient atmosphere of violence that is part of the "social" fabric of the region at the time. Immediately after this comes the "Mythic Fight" scene, a "Kelley" version of events. Against a backdrop that re-enacts his story by using "gigantic" figures created by having actors ride each others' shoulders, a grandfather tells his grandson about how the people back then were bigger and stronger and tougher. He tells of how the fight arose over a piece of land that both Donnelly and Farrell claimed. As he speaks, the giants growl incoherently at each other, then rush together in a fatal clash. The grandfather then telescopes subsequent events into a few lines, explaining that Donnelly went into hiding for a few years, then turned himself in, of how he was sentenced to hang for murder, but later had his sentence commuted to seven years. Nowhere does he explain why Donnelly turned himself in, or why the sentence was changed--apparently such details are of little interest in legend compared to the violence itself. The two scenes establish that the Donnelly story as transmitted has already entered into a different sphere of social discourse; they suggest that only some kinds of events get into the realm of legend;, and they establish the level of presentation as more "realistic," a look at the story behind the myth.

Reaney brings in the fight only after he has established the highly violent nature of the district even before the Donnellys arrive, and after he has shown how Farl, as he names the antagonist, has been part of a scheme to rob the Donnellys of all or part of the farm they have cleared from the undeveloped forest. Farl is also a member of the Whitefoot society, and goes about the district blackening the Donnelly name literally, with the epithet "Blackfoot." Where Theatre Passe Muraille puts the "real" version first, then shows how it has become transformed in the retelling, Reaney puts the "false" version" first, in the form of a patently exaggerated Medicine Show version of the fight. There is no mistaking one of Reaney's targets in this scene, as the Medicine Showman, to introduce the show and to attract and audience, uses verses of an "Old Song" from Kelley's first book, a song Kelley may well have written himself. The Showman gives his audience (and Reaney's) a taste of his version in a scene which characterizes the Donnelly's as "the Grand Guignol persons of folklore-wildcats on hot stoves" (47). These Donnellys also seem a bit like Colley's stage Irishmen, speaking in a comically distorted dialect, using words like "mither" and"fither' (48). The Medicine Show Mrs. Donnelly even surpasses Colley's in her attitude towards violence, as she warns one of her sons that "Until you've killed your man the way your darling father did, you're no son of mine" (48).

The ghost of the "real" Jim Donnelly, the one we have seen in action from the start of the play, challenges this version, and requests "Show me the scene where I kill Farl" (48). Even as the players begin to set that scene, Jim begins to find enough errors to discredit the show.. They get the weapon and the date of the fight wrong, and accept Jim's corrections, rather than challenge his version. In their Medicine Show, the fight breaks out over a drink, and the two are goaded into the fight by others. Donnelly kills Farl after the former has given up and said he will fight no more. Donnelly then intimidates the rest from trying to take him. The "real" version follows, a version much more in character with the kind of people Reaney has already shown Jim and Farl to be. Farl begins to taunt Donnelly about his black boots and then openly and repeatedly calls him Blackfoot. There is some similarity with the false version in that the others do encourage the fight, as entertainment, but Farl dies during the fight when Donnelly tries to knock him off his back with the handspike. The effect of Reaney's two scenes is to discredit the mythologized version and to reinforce the characters and antagonisms as he has been establishing them from the start, as a means to build his own version, a "White Donnellys" myth, as J. Stewart Reaney has called it (62). Building such a myth does not appear to have been Reaney's original purpose. What had originally attracted him to the story was the way it had come to be told in differing versions:

> I kept seeing all the Donnelly events in terms of two viewpoints that cross--some tell it this way / some tell it this way: The Donnelly's were at heart a decent people who were persecuted / the Donnellys were mad dogs who had to be destroyed. (J. Stewart Reaney 78)

James Reaney's placing of the decent Donnellys ahead of the mad dogs perhaps indicates not only his own sympathies, but the kind of story he prefers, and, after his many years of research, he let the two stories cross in his telling mainly to advance the one and to undermine the other.

In Them Donnellys, Theatre Passe Muraille concentrates on a much briefer span of time than either of the other two, covering events from the fight in which Jim Donnelly kills Farrell up to the murders of the five Donnellys. As such, it ignores the "foreign" entanglements and the trial to concentrate on the violent activities by and against the family in Canada, and on how the family conducted itself both in the privacy of its own unit, and in its dealings with other people in the area. That is, Theatre Passe Muraille does not concern itself with old feuds, but with the activities of a family jealously guarding its turf and its interests in Canada against both illegitimate intruders and legitimate competitors. The murders, then, are not the inevitable consequence of something done, begun, or said on foreign shores, but the consequence of circumstances within the Biddulph region itself. While drawing neither "side" as either wholly good or evil, but recognizing that the Donnellys themselves were, as artistic director Paul Thompson put it, a "mixture of evil and good" (Whittaker, "The Black Donnellys"), Theatre Passe Muraille tells the story of a breakdown of discipline within the Donnelly family and within the region, and of an abusive, hostile environment partly of its own creation that eventually surrounds and destroys the family.

The three acts of Them Donnellys, though covering a narrower time period and avoiding the foreign troubles, roughly parallel the three plays of Reaney's Donnelly trilogy. Act One deals with Jim Donnelly's imprisonment, its effects on his family, and his attempts to re-establish his authority and instill some discipline among his sons and to keep them usefully occupied after his release from prison. Act Two deals with the stage line and the business practices of the Donnellys in competition with other lines and businesses. Act Three deals with the conspiracy against the family and the bloody murder that results. The three acts combine to explore how a single, accidental violent crime sets off a chain of further violence that results years later in a night of terror. In Sticks and Stones, although he "gives away" the ending even before he explores much of the "starting," Reaney focuses mainly on how the family became established in Biddulph and began to collect enemies, and on how the mother held the family and farm together while the father served seven years for manslaughter. In St. Nicholas Hotel, Reaney tells of how the stage line run by two of the family sons created further animosity, while, finally, in Handcuffs, he covers the final conspiracy and murders. However, while both Theatre Passe Muraille and James Reaney divide their tellings into roughly analogous segments, and both explore the differences between tellings of the story as part of their own tellings, the story as each tells it employs its own distinct pattern of opposition within its arrangement of scenes, follows a distinct path to a distinct conclusion, and to a distinct cultural end. Them Donnellys arranges its scenes in a pattern wherein a moment of peaceful, constructive activity is upset by intrusive violence: in the first two acts community activity is disrupted by Donnelly violence, while in Act Three the roles reverse as the peaceful domesticity of the Donnelly home is shattered by community violence. In the Reaney trilogy, the governing pattern is one of triumph followed by a loss for the Donnelly family. Where Theatre Passe Muraille seems more interested in pursuing current sociological phenomena in a historical setting, Reaney attempts, as does his Jim Donnelly, to create a better future, to take a prophetic stance for a "New World" vision.

The constructive-destructive pattern of Them Donnellys begins in the opening "realistic fight" scene. The town has gathered for a barn-raising, a time of communal effort and building, but the creative moment deteriorates into a fight and a death. From this point the play becomes in one sense a story of how the sins of the father are visited on two generations, a story not of biblical proportions, perhaps, but to a degree of biblical import. Looked at another way, the play dramatizes some of the roots of what used to be called "juvenile delinquency," as the young Donnelly boys begin their career of "hell raisin'" while their father is in jail, unable to discipline them or keep them usefully busy. Once they get used to handling things their own way, and bullying local shopkeepers and other residents into giving them what they want, they cannot stop, and cannot be stopped either by parental authority or the existing system of justice. Their reputation and capacity for violence and for spoiling the town's peace and fun eventually creates the atmosphere that leads to their own violent deaths.

Yet another reading of this play exposes what is essentially a "New Left" interpretation of events that examines the roots of the trouble in a materialistic, capitalistic drive for economic growth and expansion, a drive that pits the Donnellys against competitors sometimes as determined and unscrupulous as they. In the end, the conflict between the Donnellys and their enemies deteriorates into a naked struggle for survival that ends in an act of communal violence, apparently sanctioned by the conventional, two-dimensional morality of the Church, or at least of the priest, Father Connolly, who seeks to repress apparent evil and to restore a virtuous calm to his parish.

Ironically, to achieve this end, the "good" act with all the unrestrained violence of the "evil." In the end, power of numbers rather than moral right decides the issue as "the town" crushes the family that has flouted its wishes and challenged its strength. In this, Passe Muraille's Donnellys are dramatic kin to Ken Mitchell's shipbuilder, Jaanus, who also runs afoul of community standards and is punished for it.

Following the "Mythic Fight," the cast gathers to sing a song of introduction to the characters and the division within the community: "On this side Lucan, and over here them Donnellys" (I, 3). The song names key participants and the parts they played, as "thugs," lovers, friends, or hell-raisers. Two verses of a song by Jim Donnelly quickly cover his reaction to being sent to prison, and introduce a scene showing the trouble Mrs. Donnelly (Julia, in this version, but Johannah historically and in Colley and most of Reaney) had raising seven high-spirited sons and a daughter without a husband to help. Jim's song picks up again, as he brags of how he lived in hiding and even fathered the daughter while the police sought him: "Yes I had me a daughter though hunted and scorned / I showed them Jim Donnelly still ruled his own home." (I, 6). These words establish him as a patriarch, or at least someone with patriarchal ambitions, someone who seeks to make his own rules for and within the family circle. Again action intercuts the song, showing how

Jim Jr. chafed at having to stay behind and help with the family even though old enough to be out on his own. Finally, Jim Sr. returns and greets his family, not even sure after the separation which son is which. More importantly, he loses an arm-wrestling competition with Tom, symbolizing that he can no longer exercise complete physical mastery over his sons, who have outgrown him in his absence.

The reunion of the father with the family also marks the beginning of a period of expansion that culminates in the murders years later. Although Donnelly's fifty acres is "one of the best farms on the line" (I, 10), it is not enough to occupy even one son for more than three days a week. He needs a bigger farm to keep the sons busy and together. Besides, several other farmers in the district have expanded their holding while he was in prison, and Jim fears they will "push me under unless I get a better hold" (I, 11). From this point, the action plays out the clash of interests as the Donnellys and their neighbours try to drive each other out of business. Jim Donnelly's desire to establish what sounds like a patriarchal fiefdom, where he will rule over an estate worked by his sons and their families, finds echoes in Andras Tahn 's Jakob Kepp (1979), another play based on a historical event, this one in Saskatchewan. There is also something of Jim Donnelly in old Anton Kalicz, of Rudy Wiebe's Far As The Eye Can See (1977, a play based on contemporary events in Alberta).

There is a Theatre Passe Muraille connection with both plays: Tahn and his Twenty-Fifth Street House Theatre had worked with Theatre Passe Muraille in the mid 1970s, as had Wiebe in writing his play. This might suggest that the confining semi-feudal patriarch is one of the archetypes Passe Muraille has either discovered or fostered in its search for Canadian myth. If so, it is an archetype which Reaney sets his Jim Donnelly in contrast to.

Jim's ambitions run into trouble as the action switches to the sons in a sequence called "Hellin' Around." This demonstrates that Jim's fears for keeping his sons usefully occupied are well grounded,as the town complains about the trouble the boys are always up to. They mistreat neighbours' cattle, then shoplift from and threaten the shopkeeper, leading up to a scene where Jim recites what he has heard of their reputations, and tries to re-establish his firm hand over the family, a hand holding a leather belt. He is especially concerned with how talk in the town blackens the family name and reputation, and gives his competitors, like Casey, a chance to build up sympathy for Donnelly "victims" and threatens his chances to build the family holdings. He also seems to see the hell-raising as a waste of energy that could more usefully go into building the family fortunes, rather than undermining or wasting them.

The way that reputation works against the family becomes clear as Will courts Maggie Thompson. The Thompsons hate the Donnellys, and want no part of Will, so they step between the two young lovers to arrange a different marriage for their daughter. Will has to try to kidnap her, and gets plenty of help from various brothers and a gang of other wild youths of the area--the Donnellys are not the only trouble-makers, just the ones who get most of the blame. However, Maggie's father has already hidden her away where Will cannot find her, preventing the marriage and any future happiness between the two. Partly because he expects to find Maggie there, and partly just to stir up trouble for the Thompsons, Will goes to a chivaree for William Thompson Jr. and his bride, Mary. The chivaree turns into a night of terror as the "guests," egged on by Will's furious fiddle playing and demonic appearance, smash the house and furniture. While the Donnellys do not do all the damage, they are clearly the instigators, and the scene clearly demonstrates what can happen to people who try to thwart the Donnelly boys' ambitions. Their taste for rough tactics is too engrained even for their father to cast out.

Act Two brings the theme of competition and monopolistic capitalism into the play as it traces the business practices of Tom Donnelly and his Opposition Stage Line. At first, the dispute between Tom and his main competitor, Hawkshaw of the Royal Mail, is a satire of the kind of whining that "free-enterprise" business people get up to whenever they face real competition. There is nothing obviously unethical about Tom altering his schedule to leave earlier than Hawkshaw. In theory, Tom's free-enterprise approach is what business is all about--offer a superior service to attract a greater clientele, even if it means driving your competitor into bankruptcy. Hawkshaw, of course, does not see things this way. In another satiric attack on how business gets done, a Donnelly enemy named Flannigan, willing to go into competition on Tom Donnelly's own terms, takes advantage of Hawkshaw's problems to buy the business for less than it is worth.

In their mad determination to outdo each other, Tom and Flannigan recklessly endanger themselves, their horses, and their passengers, in a wild race that ends with Tom's coach a wreck and his lead horse dead. This sets up a revenge sequence that escalates the level of violence within the town. When Flannigan refuses to pay for Tom's lost horse, Tom and brother Bob cut Flannigan's coach in two. Flannigan then burns the Donnelly stables, complete with horses and coaches. Here, family solidarity saves Tom, when his parents offer to mortgage the farm to help re-establish the line. However, the cycle of revenge has gone too far already, as Bob comes in from having mutilated Flannigan's horses, and having spelled out Tom's name in horse's tongues nailed to the stable door. When the constable comes to arrest him, Tom bites his nose off. Finally, Tom and

Flannigan meet in a "Fire Fight," in which the two face each other with burning torches and proceed to burn down not only each other's property, but also several other farms and businesses as well. The play authenticates this sequence through the recitation of a list of the properties that were burned in this outbreak of incendiarism. The scene ends with a woman leaning out of her window, watching a neighbour's farm go up in flames, fearing that her own is next, and screaming hysterically, "It's those Donnellys. It's the Donnellys" (II, 13). The scene shows the level of violence within the township, and how both the Donnellys and their enemies took part, but how in the end only the Donnellys took the blame, thanks to their reputation.

The scene quickly changes to a sneering Will, who tells the audience that, in spite of appearances, some establishments were left standing, and that we are all going now to one of them, Fitzhenry's Hotel, for a wedding. This scene parallels the chivaree scene in Act One. It opens with a friendly exchange of toasts and good wishes between the families of the bride and groom at Tom Ryder's wedding. The aura of peacefulness lasts until two constables arrive to arrest Jim Donnelly Jr. It is interesting that, even though they have a reputation for violence and trouble-making, and have apparently been left carrying the sole blame for the fires, the Donnellys also seem to enjoy a reputation as good people to have at a party. Here they are clearly invited and wanted guests, and the others try to intercede on Jim's behalf, if only because he is the best dancer there. Jim offers to go along after the dance, but one constable wants to take him right away. Will gets involved, harassing the constables and leading one away in a dance. The other, however, goes for Jim, who loses his temper and kills him in a fight. When Jim tries to return to the dance, he and his "stupid brothers" are ordered away by Ryder and the others (II, 17). Their talent for attracting trouble and their capacity for unbridled violence creates one more break between the Donnelly boys and the townspeople who grow weary of and frustrated at their antics and extreme reactions to authority.

A musician suggests that Ryder take them to court and let the lawyers handle things. After all, he says, clearly drawing the events into the realm of "current language," "it's the modern way now" (II, 18). A "talking blues" introduces this new aspect of the conflict, establishing it within a documentary context by noting

> Eighteen seventy-six was the year
> That in Biddulph township there did appear
> A modern and civilized sport,
> Played in London in the Middlesex court. (II, 18)

The song goes on to list a series of suits and counter suits that eventually involve all of the Donnellys and many other residents besides. Much as the stage line scenes earlier satirized capitalistic small and big business, this song mocks the "modern" way of fighting, a way that seems to reward no one but the lawyers. Not only that, but the Donnellys never seem to get what others seem to think they have coming to them, but instead get off the charges or face minimal sentences. The last lines of the song, and of the act, express the town's attitude and frustration:

> Tough bunch.
> Bad family.
> Hard to control. (II, 20)

Where parental discipline (what Johns introduces in the "Authors (sic) Note" to his 1979 version as "the laws of the family") had failed to restore order within the family unit at the end of Act One, the judicial system (in Johns the "laws of society") fails to impose the will of the town upon the Donnellys at the end of Act Two.

The first two acts opened in the public arena, but Act Three opens in the domestic, beginning quietly, even mildly comically with Tom serving as a seamstress's dummy for his mother as she makes a dress. His sister, Jenny, teases him about his evident embarrassment, then announces that she and her husband, Dan, are expecting a baby, news that excites Julia. The domestic tranquility and family camaraderie of this opening are in stark contrast to the public violence of the previous act. But just as virtually every previous scene of such tranquility has deteriorated into violence or threat, this one quickly changes as well, as Jenny hears a warning note of danger drawn out on a fiddle. As the sound continues, the actor who later plays Jim Carroll, his face made up in a death mask, enters as a "Grim Reaper" figure who circles the kitchen and menaces the house with a large axe, the whole threatening action seen only by Jenny, who tries to warn her parents to leave the house. Her evident distress is ruled mere over-excitement about the baby, and the warning goes unheeded as she is carried away to rest.

In this final act, the family finds itself subject to a distorted and ultimately fatal interpretation of what Johns later presents as the "laws of God," or of the will of one powerful clergyman. Attention shifts immediately to the "final" arbiter in this conflict, as Father Connolly, acting in response to confessions and complaints that suggest a fear-ridden parish suffering from moral, social and economic decay, delivers a sermon that, without actually naming the Donnellys, seems to point the finger at Will Donnelly in particular as the source and embodiment of evil in the district:

> When I first came here, I expected you to be no better or no worse than people in other parishes. But I was wrong. You are different. You are different, because you have allowed evil to get a stranglehold in this community. And we all know where that evil lies. The devil has shown his

club-foot in Biddulph. (III, 4).

He further urges the townspeople to pull themselves together and to act to "destroy the evil in this community now," concluding with a formulaic and ultimately ironic "Go in peace."

A handwritten revision of this sermon, appended to the transcript of the 1974 version removes much that could be understood as making specific reference to the Donnellys or to Will. The sermon is against a more general "evil" that has "taken root in this community," and urges more co-operation among the citizens: "Only by setting aside your sinful past and once again reaching out to help your neighbours will this evil cycle of rumour and revenge be ended." The subsequent interpretation and action by the neighbours seems after this to be more wilfully mistaken, and seems to plant the "evil" not among the Donnellys but among their enemies. Johns finally does not include this sermon at all in his version, preferring to let Connolly be a figure behind the action, someone talked about and someone whose words are repeated and used and interpreted to justify violence, without actually appearing on stage to appear to advocate such extremes.

After the service, the congregation gathers to discuss what Connolly has said and meant. While some claim not to know or to understand the reference, one woman retorts: He talked about the devil in the parish. And he talked about a cripple in Biddulph. Who do you think he was talking about?" (III, 5). The effect of the sermon and its interpretation is soon apparent, as the men decide to band together to search for a "lost" cow. They "move off with great good humour and a great sense of doing something at last that is constructive" (III, 5). Such "constructive" moments have, in the past, always led to Donnelly violence: this one leads to violence against the Donnellys. As had been the case in the earlier scenes, things seem to get out of hand as good spirits give way to open vandalism and destruction of property and peace. Jim and Julia Donnelly will not allow any trespass onto their property; she asks for a warrant, temporarily throwing "the whole bunch into confusion" (III, 7), a confusion that gives way to frustrated anger. Finally one particularly antagonistic figure, Casey, kicks over the Donnelly fence as the "first breach is made" (III, 8), not only in the fence, but in the Donnelly aura. In a scene that mirrors the chivaree, the mob "totally destroy everything," not just in the barns or stables, but in the house as well--obviously this has gone beyond any pretext of a search for a lost cow.

Julia runs to Will's to warn him that the mob is coming. Her "heroic effort" owes something to Laura Secord's walk, as she is shown "climbing over fences and running through the bush" (III, 9), although it is accomplished in a manner owing something to Erwin Piscator's famous treadmills. Julia's "walk" takes place on a wagon that is wheeled about the stage as she enacts her journey in the wagon box. Supported only by his mother, Will confronts his foes, threatens them first with a shotgun then faces them down armed only with his fiddle and his devilish reputation. A song that draws attention to his crippled foot, and a "wild dance" with his mother, a dance "which should have all the overtones of the devil in it" (III, 11), throws the mob into fearful, confusion and they leave, their work unfinished.

After a brief scene in which John Kennedy Sr. announces to his son that Will is about to marry into the family, news that forges a split between father and son while at the same time showing that some neighbours do not find the Donnelly name anathema, Carroll, the nemesis of the Donnellys, enters the action in a brilliant transformation scene. The "Grim Reaper" figure who appeared at the start of the play re-enters and slowly and deliberately removes his white face to become Carroll, the embodiment of Death in this play. This transformation should do away with any further need to explain Carroll's actions, but he later also alludes to his implacable, and unexplained, hatred of the Donnellys. By comparison, Colley identified Carroll merely as "a big roughneck" tough enough to confront the Donnellys, while Reaney points up a family link between Carroll and the Farls, relatives of the man Jim Donnelly killed. Theatre

Passe Muraille chooses to make him a more mythic figure, a death-dealer with no other function or reason necessary. Although superficially acting with the force of law, as constable, Carroll is a law unto himself, it seems, going about the district ordering the fearful not to leave, and brutally manufacturing perjured cases against the Donnellys in an attempt to force them out "legally." When this fails, he turns to physical force, leading a band of vigilantes to Jim and Julia's house as the fiddle takes up its threatening note again.

The actual murder scene follows the general "peaceful to violent" pattern of the whole. As the mob circles "outside," the unsuspecting Donnellys prepare for bed, and husband and wife exchange a few jokes about the court trial the family has to face the following day. Their peaceful sleep is interrupted by loud knocks at the door. When Tom answers, Carroll snaps on a pair of handcuffs and tells him he is under arrest. Jim and Julia arrive angry and demanding to see Carroll's warrant, but, in a highly stylized scene in which the deaths are enacted one by one as the murderers and the other Donnellys hold in a freeze. The victims, Jim, Julia, Bridget and Tom, die individually and "alone," thrashing about as if being beaten and stabbed to death by the clubs and pitchforks suspended above them. This prolongs the scene of violence, and also focuses on the deaths singly, making each a private moment of horror, rather than combining them into a scene of group destruction. The murderers then burn their victims to destroy any evidence, then move off towards Will's house where they shoot John, thinking he is Will.

The play ends in a tragic tableau, with Will and Bob Donnelly laying out the dead, singing of the cold loneliness of the grave, and of the irony that those who hated each other in life now lie side by side in the graveyard in Lucan: "They found peace together only after they died" (III, 22). Without identifying any particular focus or source for evil, or separating one side from the other, they lament that "Good lives are lost where evil is found." As they finish laying out the bodies and end the song, they turn to face the audience, with the evidence of the carnage and the waste. Who is to blame does not matter; in the end, the song and play suggest, the resulting tragedy is the same when the "evil" of uncompromising violence becomes established in the pattern of community life. In the end, Them Donnollys is more a cautionary tale than a history.

Reaney's trilogy covers roughly the same period of time as Colley's The Donnellys, taking into account the Donnelly troubles in Ireland and continuing through the trial that let the murderers go unpunished. Where Colley seems intent, at least at the outset, on proving that people like the Donnellys are just too stubborn to avoid trouble, and in fact seem to have a talent for finding it, Reaney seeks to show that the Donnellys were a superior breed of people whose very resistance to the bullying and violence aimed at them earns them a more positive characterization than history, or at least, legend, has provided.

The essential difference between the two is that Colley sees the murders stemming from what the Donnellys stand against, Reaney from what they stand for. Where Colley portrays Jim Donnelly as a stubborn bully in his own right, someone whose resistance is instinctive and violent, especially when the Whitefeet "get his Irish up," Reaney's Jim Donnelly is more a visionary and a prophet, who can imagine a "new world" free from the violence and antagonisms of the "old world" he left behind. Furthermore, he commits himself and his family to the creation of that new society. Where Colley can let his Jim Donnelly wonder why he and his family are "used so," Reaney's Donnelly chooses to be different, and knows why he is persecuted. They are, in the final analysis, murdered because they refuse to bring the old troubles with them, thereby creating a "new" problem. Reaney makes their ideal, and even their idealism, the material of a new myth, one of hope and creativity, rather than of despair and destruction.

In tearing down an old negative myth and replacing it with a newer, positive one, Reaney acts out one of his own cultural ideals. In a "A Letter from James Reaney," published in 1976 he explains how society is built on story, or myth, and suggests that if we "get used" to this idea, "maybe we'll wake up and realize that we can get a better story" (4).[15] The Donnelly trilogy is notable for the countless intersecting voices, each telling part of the story, or repeating part of it from a different perspective. While it is clear that Reaney has a favoured way of telling the Donnelly story, with the Donnellys the virtuous victims of an older, destructive mentality, he also seeks to make his three plays as much about story telling and story tellers with their motives and influences, as about the story told. He is not, moreover, interested in just any story, as he further explains in the "Letter," where he refers to Eskimo masks and of a master mask that controls the art and spirit of maskmaking itself: "My theatre is after this mask that controls other masks, and I happen to think that it's the idea of pure STORY" (5). What matters more than the facts of the Donnelly tragedy is the "backbone" or story shape around which Reaney builds his telling of it. In this case, perhaps in another satirical slap at Kelley and his spurious "Old Song" of the Donnellys, he builds around an authentic "Old Song," the "John Barleycorn ballad, as sung by John Abbott of Peterborough, [Ontario]" (6).

The song/mask, which the full cast sings before the action begins, and parts of which are sung at appropriate points throughout the three plays, provides Reaney with both a plot line and with a selection of images and motifs to characterize the two sides of the conflict For example, the song contains many references to agricultural and milling implements, such as sticks, stones, flails, scythes and sickles, and hooks, all of which are used on stage, both by and against the Donnellys. In the song, these objects are used mainly by the "enemies" of the barley grain in a series of attacks on its essence and its physical integrity. After each attack, except for the last, the barley re-emerges, though often somewhat transformed or transfigured by the experience, perhaps with a somewhat reduced vitality, but momentarily triumphant. Always it is set upon again. Tim McNamara sees this pattern in part when he notes how the pattern of the song, as he sees it, matches the overall pattern of the trilogy, of "a Donnelly triumph followed by a Donnelly loss" (375). McNamara, however, ignores the final stage of each attack, the resurgence of the barley.

In a related point, McNamara points out that the first stanza of the song,

> Oh, three men went to Deroughata
> To sell three loads of rye.
> They shouted up and they shouted down
> The barley grain should die, (13)

"captures the attitude of Biddulph to the Donnellys" (361). This view is particularly pertinent of the last line: if we substitute "the Donnellys" for "the barley grain," we have in effect the title of Miller's book (The Donnellys Must Die). However, it would be a risky endeavour at best to try to parallel specific actions of the Donnellys or their enemies to specific actions or figures in the song. Some of the risk is clear if we try, for example, to identify dramatic analogues for the "three Men." Three men with Irish surnames figure strongly against the Donnellys" Cassleigh, the bully and killer who becomes the local magistrate; Carroll, the constable hired to kill the Donnellys or to drive them away; and Father Connolly, who, even more than in the Theatre Passe Muraille version, hurls a volatile mixture of religion and politics against them. But what, then, of the many other prominent antagonists, also with Irish surnames like Stubs or O'Halloran, or even Farl, who could equally well be put forward at various times as candidates. The mask is a controlling shape: not a map or chart of equivalences, but an outline of an action.

As part of his mythopoeic dimension, Reaney has Jim Donnellys's own language and actions echo the language and pattern of the song as he reacts to the first attack on his farm and his tenancy, in Sticks and Stones:

> Because I loved my land and stuck to it,
> I killed and in turn you broke my bones, burnt my home
> Harvested me and my sons like sheaves and stood

> Us to die upon our ground
> Where nothing now will ever grow. (41)

In this passage Reaney also establishes one of the most frequently commented upon links between the Donnelly story and the ballad: the symbolic connections elaborated most fully by J. Stewart Reaney, who calls the Donnellys "inhabitants of the seasonal world of nature and fertility" (63). The Donnellys and the barley are both seen as constructive, vital, "summer" forces of growth under assault by the "winter" forces of what Gerald Parker, borrowing from Northrop Frye, calls the "sick society" of Biddulph, a community

> "sick' inasmuch as it appears solidly against he image of "vitality," and inasmuch as it gradually discloses the "retaliatory malice" of a masked force determined to preserve its real and imaginary privileges. (173)

The malicious "masked force" that works against the Donnellys can be seen as a representation of the "wrong" kind of story or mask, the kind that works destructively within a society. Jim Donnelly's actions as the steward of his farm and provider for his family, which contrast sharply with those of the frustrated, calculating patriarch of _Them Donnellys_, and his determination not to join the forces of "night," presided over by Matthew Midnight and other such "winter" figures, identify him with forces of growth, fertility and light. For example, he does not turn himself in for trial until he is sure that his winter wheat crop has safely sprouted under the snow, awaiting spring. Symbolically, we can read this as Donnelly making sure that his family is "sprouted," that is, has established itself firmly enough to survive the "winter" of his absence, the difficult times that will follow his sentence.

In Handcuffs, Reaney further exploits this identification of the Donnellys with grain to give an ironic twist to the final fatal attack. The twist begins when the sanctimonious O'Halloran offers the cliche hope that the bishop will be able to "sort the wheat from the chaff" in Biddulph. The audience is already clear as to which is which, and O'Halloran would not appreciate the division. The cliche then gets a further twist, again working against the Donnellys' enemies, when Bridget's ghost describes her murder, in terms echoing both the song and O'Halloran's words. The ghost does not wail of being clubbed to death, but of being beaten "with the flail that unhusks your soul" (266). She characterizes her death as a release of her soul from the body which has enclosed it. In a sense she almost seems to be thanking her murderers for helping her to find the "freedom" she had sought in Ontario, a freedom sung of in her introduction in Act One of Handcuffs.

The master shape, or master mask, the pattern of attack, adaptation and resurgence, followed by renewed attack, and the pattern of seasonal activities that the song also tells of, continues throughout the "Barleycorn Ballad" until the highly significant final stanza. Up to this point, the song has been "sung" largely from the first-person perspective of the barley grain: "Then the farmer came with a big plough, / He ploughed me under the sod" (13). The final stanza switches into the third person, relating the eventual fate of the barley grain from an external point of view:

> Then they drank you in the kitchen
> And they drank you in the hall,
> But the drunkard he used you worse
> He pissed you against the wall. (14)

This stanza might appear to be the voice of the contemptuous "victor," coarsely mocking the fallen barley grain. Substitute "killed" for "drank," and you have a precis of the murder scene itself. Such a reading, however, runs counter to Reaney's myth in an important way. In this final stanza there is no recovery from this last assault/insult, no voice from beyond the grave, such as Jim Donnelly's in the fight scene from Sticks and Stones, or those of other Donnelly ghosts who appear in Handcuffs. Reaney, however, consistently appears interested in the song as a story or master shape of endurance and resilience, and certainly his trilogy ends with a celebration of continuity and resurrection. As it would later in Ken Mitchell's The

Plainsman, the Shelleyian "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind" motif makes its way into a Canadian myth. The final stanza makes more sense within this context if we hear this final stanza as a model for the voice of the Donnelly survivors, lamenting the apparent waste and loss, in ironic counterpoint to the closing scene of Handcuffs, where they mourn against a symbolic backdrop of newly sprouted wheat, a backdrop speaking of resurrection. The wheat was sown the previous autumn by two of the now-dead Donnellys, John and Tom. The attacks and murders have not, the scene indicates, eradicated the Donnellys or their legacy of resistance from the district; quite the contrary, they seem only to have given the survivors more reason to carry on and to rebuild, given them a new chapter in the story they must strive to live up to.

Their association with growth and fertility is not the only Donnelly virtue, although it is certainly a key one. Reaney also shows them to be open and courageous where their opponents are skulking cowards. Moreover, even more than did Theatre Passe Muraille, he establishes them as a source of artistic creativity within the district. The main source of courage and inspiration in the family is Mrs. Donnelly. In Sticks and Stones, while her husband is in prison, she faces down the enmity of the ironically misnamed "Whiteboys" faction. She comes across a group of men, led by Cassleigh, torturing Donegan, while his sister, Farl's widow, and another group of men look on helplessly. In a magnificent scene, Mrs. Donnelly stands alone against the mob and orders them to stop. The Donnelly character is stamped in her command:

> Give Mr Donegan back his clothes . . . raise him out of that mud. Dung! There's fields of grain to garner with bread for you all and you'd rather be thorns to each other. There's tables of food for you to eat and you won't come and sit down at them. (77)

Her language is rich with the fertility metaphor, particularly when she further characterizes the mob as "weeds" in a potential Garden of Eden. This act of resistance, which solidifies Cassleigh's hatred, also sets a standard of bravery against which her husband eventually measures even himself. In his own confrontation with Cassleigh, in Act Three, Donnelly reminds his enemy that Mrs. Donnelly is "the only person in this settlement who ever stood up to you. She stopped you from cutting up Donegan and until she's afraid and wants to leave I'm not either" (91).

As a centre for the artistic potential of the family, not only does Mrs. Donnelly consistently speak at a "poetic' level of expression, something she shares with other members of the family, but it is she who gives Will the fiddle his parents have bought for him, to be the music for his "entire lifetime" (20). She reminds Will that in Canada he and the rest "are as free as it is to play all the tunes" (21). The fiddle becomes the source of Will's strength, a "weapon" he chooses over a gun in Act Three of St. Nicholas Hotel, when in a scene similar in effect, if not in demonic tone with one from Act Three of Them Donnellys, accompanied only by his wife, Norah, and his aging mother, he faces down a mob by playing his fiddle in their faces and driving them away from his farm. The "winter people" do not seem to be able to face openly any creative challenge to their dark ways. As the mob runs, Will thanks his mother, acknowledging: "One fiddle you gave me a lame boy of twelve, has been worth forty men with rifles and clubs" (176).

Dividing the two sides up by their natures, as Reaney does, divides the conflict clearly into one between a small force pursuing virtuous progress, acting for the potential of and for a "New World" and a larger, vicious, restrictive "business as usual" force acting in part as an expression of an "Old World" mentality. Reaney does not try to show this as "typical" of the Biddulph region. His contending forces are more general (though not necessarily, despite Reaney's search for a "better" story for Canada, "National") than "regional" or "local" in scope. Reaney's mythic scope is even larger than has been suggested by Eric Roberts, who in his reading of the trilogy sees the story as the myth of a minority crushed by a majority (170): Reaney has something much more positive in mind. With the "Summer-Winter" opposition, and the final determined "sprouting" of the summer forces, Reaney takes his story beyond the immediate carnage and seeks to create at least the beginnings of a more "comic" mythic configuration, a story of at least of survival if not of reconciliation, out of a story of hatred, violence and potential tragedy.

Reaney, ultimately, goes well beyond both Colley and Theatre Passe Muraille, and places his Donnellys within a wider Canadian pattern defined by Rick Salutin, a pattern of determined and continued resistance. That is, although he bases his play upon what is generally a widely known story, or at least a story of great local interest, Reaney interprets it within the context of what Salutin describes as Canada's "missing" history, ("Great Canadian History Robbery" 58). What has been "missing," Salutin says, has been the history of those who stood against entrenched interests and forces that sought to limit personal and social freedom and progress. Salutin, working with Theatre Passe Muraille, in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt has himself sought to "replace" some of this history, using the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada as his example. Salutin's, however, is an example not of history from a "regional" perspective (though, as Chapter Six explains, it began as such). Rather, it is an example of the history of "class struggle." Salutin's play shares presentational documentary theatrical means with elements of Them Donnellys. However, more importantly, in its dramatic configuration, looking to the future to realise the potential implanted in and surviving from the past, it shares a vision of history and a cultural objective with Reaney's Donnelly trilogy.

There is one final important consideration: in his version of events, particularly in Sticks and Stones, Reaney looks at what is in effect a matriarchy, and it is his characterization of Judith Donnelly that gives his play and myth a tragic dimension. Judith Donnelly sets the tone for her family, not just as the one who stands up against the likes of Cassleigh and Stubbs, but also as the one who holds the family together and protects the farm while her husband is in prison, and, to a large degree, when he is home as well. As long as she is not afraid, James Donnelly affirms, he is not afraid. She also seems to be the one who realizes more clearly than most "the pound we're locked in" (81) by their Donnelly pride. In a confrontation with her own ghost (an externalization, perhaps, of her own inner mental state), she confronts the role of choice in the eventual fate of herself and her family: "Your first mistake was to choose to stay here at all" (81). This may be true, but Judith finds herself in a common tragic situation, one where she cannot win with either choice. If she stays and resists, she faces hardship and death. If she goes, she loses her personal integrity.

Certainly Judith's stubborn insistence on a "New World" of opportunity, and her refusal to give in to Old World animosities carry the seeds of tragic hubris. However, she risks breaking an important moral law only in the leaving, not in the staying. Her stubbornness, given her knowledge or understanding of the consequences, goes beyond even her husband's. The Old World still has a hold on him, made evident in his resentment of the name "Blackfoot," and his striking out against those who use it. Where he can still be hurt by Old World language, she tries to remind him of the proverb "that sticks and stones may hurt my bones, but words will never harm them" (45). Her proverb is also, of course (and with probable unintentional irony on Reaney's part), an example of Old World language, one of those examples, like Jaanus' farming practices, that from time to time suggest there are useful things to be learned or recalled from the non-Canadian past as well.

What works somewhat against the tragic potential of Judith Donnelly is the moral one-sidedness of her choices. If she made other choices, refused to step in to stop Cassleigh, for example, we would think less of her as a person, and would find her heroic stature reduced. She would be a quitter. In her consistency she is more a melodramatic than a tragic heroine: at least as defined by Eric Bentley:

> . . . while the hero of melodrama is a pillar of

> virtue, and therefore always does the right thing, the tragic hero at some crucial point does the wrong thing, one view of the subject being that he is "betrayed by what is false within." (265)[16]

While it might be argued that what is "false" within her is the way she teaches her sons to stand up for the family and against outsiders (that is, somewhat like the Mrs. Donnelly of Colley's The Donnellys, she teaches them violence), it seems clear that Reaney at least wants us to admire her choices and her resolve. Although this might reduce the tragic potential of the character somewhat, it by no means diminishes Judith Donnelly's stature or her obvious attractiveness as a role model for other Canadians in general, or her status as a heroine, a model for women in particular.

In another treatment, as indicated by her Laura Secord-like walks--about the township gathering signatures to petition clemency for her husband, or to Goderich to deliver that petition, as well as the one that appears in both the Theatre Passe Muraille and Reaney versions to warn Will of the rampaging vigilantes--she could herself easily become the focus of a play in her own right. In such a case, she would provide an even clearer example than she does of the heroic woman in Canadian history. She would then join not just Laura Secord, but a band of equally determined, physically and morally courageous women who have risen (or attempted to rise) constructively to the needs of their region, their race, their country, or, as the next chapter examines, to their own gender as a group.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Feminine/Feminist Shaping of Canada

Sarah Curzon's Laura Secord, The Heroine of 1812 was perhaps the first Canadian play written "to rescue from oblivion the name of a brave woman, and set it among its proper place among the heroes of Canadian history" (Wagner, ed. Women Pioneers 94), but the tradition continues. As minor characters in greater social or political movements, historically documentable women like Mme. Tourond, Janet Reitz, Louise Lucas or Mrs. Donnelly, or recreations like Elizabeth Postlethwaite and Anna Lutz (or even the much-pressed "Bessie" sung of in Paper Wheat) have been "rescued" to play out their moments on the "national" or "regional" stage. Rescue missions seeking, like Laura Secord, to promote women to central roles in Canadian history, though of a different "kind" of history, are behind What Glorious Times They Had, by Diane Grant and Company (1974), and Wendy Lill's The Fighting Days (1984), plays dramatizing the suffragist movement in Winnipeg in the early twentieth century. Both bring to the stage major figures from the women's movement: Nellie McClung (Glorious Times) and McClung and her lieutenant, Francis (sic) Beynon (Fighting Days), figures "rediscovered" by the writers from the "forgotten" stories of women's struggle for political equality in Canada.

While it might be possible to place these plays within the "regional" history section, given their specific settings in Winnipeg, both plays go beyond "local" considerations and are clearly products of the growing feminist movement that gained momentum from the later 1960s, and of the resultant "determination to recover the distinctive historical experiences of woman," a determination that had two objectives: "to redress the bias of a history that had been written by men, and to satisfy a demand for recognition of members of the female sex not only as a passive group but as important actors in their own right" (Berger 312).[17] In What Glorious Times They Had, the word "actors" takes on an extra significance, as Grant and company reenact, as a play-within-a-play, a famous "Mock Parliament" staged in Winnipeg in 1914. While the play is particularly successful in showing women as "actors in their own right," however, it also indicates that "redressing the bias" does not necessarily mean redressing the fact of bias, but can also mean refocussing bias from a different perspective, as part of an act of celebration of the apparent successes of women, achieved by women. However, since the success, in both plays, but particularly in What Glorious Times They Had, is in the public, political sphere, the plays do not address another feminist historical objective that Berger identifies for writing a different kind of history: neither seeks to "place greater emphasis on such subjects as life cycles, family, kinship, and childhood" (Berger 312). Finally, while both suggest that there is more to historical "success" than the passage of a desirable piece of legislation, the contrasts between them also indicate that the historical experience of "women" is no more homogeneous than, and as subject to a misleading selection process as, the historical experience of "Canada," or of any "group" within Canada.

Grant, a founder of the Toronto feminist group Redlight Theatre, became interested in McClung after the issue of a stamp marking the one-hundredth anniversary of McClung's birth (Grant 16). Up to this time, Grant claims, she had never heard of McClung, since "she had not been taught about her in school." Several budding playwrights of the late 60s and early 70s have made such claims about their chosen subjects-- claim that seek, apparently, to indict a school system bent on misrepresenting history. W. L. Morton had predicted such a "backlash" as early as 1946, in his famous article "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," in which he argued:

> Teaching inspired by the historical experience of metropolitan Canada cannot but deceive, and deceive cruelly, children of the outlying sections [to which he could have added the "outlying" social sectors]. Their experience after school

> will contradict the instruction of the history class, and develop in them that dichotomy which characterizes all hinterland Canadian, a nationalism cut athwart by a sense of sectional injustice. (46-47)

Her interest and sense of injustice stirred, Grant researched McClung's varied career as journalist, author and activist, and chose to create, with a company of actors, a play that would concentrate on "[McClung's] role in the enfranchisement of women in Manitoba." The play was to be the first in a projected, though apparently never developed, series called "Biographies of Lost Women."

Lill's play "evolved specifically from [an idea for] a play about unsung women in Manitoba history--the contributions of women throughout Manitoba history" (Mitchell, "A Feeling for Our History" 17). When Kim McKaw, director of Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange, suggested that the Women's Press Club of Winnipeg might make a suitable setting for such a play, Lill began to research that club: there she "found Francis Beynon. It just clicked completely together then. She was exactly the right central figure" (17). Another major figure in that club was, of course, McClung.

Lill's phrase "exactly the right central figure" is particularly noteworthy. It prompts several important questions about similar selection processes from history into drama: right in what way? For what purpose? Why Beynon rather than the more prominent McClung, who was "right" for Grant? The answers to these questions show that Grant and Lill--although they begin with apparently similar motives, include characters with the same names, set their plays in the same place at roughly the same time--differ distinctly in their assessments and presentations of the Manitoba suffragist movement and invite distinctly different responses from their audiences. Grant and company present McClung as the popular leader of a harmonious, unified, and ultimately successful movement that includes Beynon as a willing, hard-working minor figure, and invite their audience to see McClung and her actions as positive role models in the continuing struggle for women's rights in Canada. Lill presents an idealistic, pacifist Beynon, who begins as an admiring acolyte to the older McClung, but who finds herself forced into exile in the United States when she ends up on the losing side in a debate within the suffragist movement, a debate that pits her against a more conservative, even reactionary, McClung. Lill invites her audience to consider the shortcomings as well as the successes of the movement. In these two plays, then, "about" the "same" people and roughly the same events, we see again the two most common patterns of historical playwriting practised by Canadian playwrights. Grant seeks primarily to provide a model of how Canadians, women in this case, have historically dealt with their problems and solved them, while still leaving room to acknowledge that, in spite of relative progress, problems remain to be solved. Lill focuses more on how attachments to inappropriate historical standards or models of behaviour have prevented greater achievements and more positive change: that is, even more than Grant and company, she focuses on the "unfinished business of the past."

How is it possible for the "same" event, involving people in the "same" place, to be both successes and failures at the same time? The answer begins with the fact that the two plays, by differently defining the beginnings and endings, differently define the "event." Grant, drawing heavily from chapters XIII, XIV and XV of McClung's 1945 autobiography The Stream Runs Fast for incidents (though not necessarily for chronology or characters) features the period from 1912 to 1916, and ends her play with the granting of the vote to women in Manitoba. Lill begins in 1910, and takes the action one year farther, to debates about the federal Wartime Elections Act of 1917, which found Beynon and McClung taking different stances. There is, therefore, a distinct difference in the scope of the issues the two plays include. What Grant treats as purely a matter of provincial politics, Lill extends into the national and international arena. In Glorious Times, for example, we never hear of the First World War, and never hear any of

McClung and Beynon's pacifist rhetoric, but both are prominent sources of friction in The Fighting Days. By redefining the events, the two plays recast the historical figures as dramatic characters involved in significantly different conflicts, with significantly different outcomes and significantly different lessons to teach. Yet both plays also still represent moments of transfer, or failure to transfer, to a more equitable, moral social and political plane, and invite their audiences to see the actions as successes or failures in moralistic terms by casting the conflicts in terms of battles between good and evil, or relative good and relative evil.

The "enemies" Grant's McClung has to face, in an openly melodramatic piece that pits the virtuous cause of women against the evil entrenched power of men, are Manitoba premier Sir Rodmond Roblin and his parliamentary secretary, P. T. Fletcher, with their characteristic patronizing attitudes towards women. While this leads to two-dimensional characterizations and a rather simple, even simplistic, telling of the story, an assessment like Urjo Kareda's that the play "has neither characters nor scenes nor structure " (The ladies lose this vote") is more a reflection on the kind of complex, naturalistic drama Kareda tends to prefer than an accurate description of the play. Grant, in fact, uses that structure common for Canadian historical plays: Act one, set out the problem; Act two, show the solution, or at least the solution attempted in the face of opposition from entrenched interests. As with other examples of this structure--Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre's Paper Wheat, Carol Bolt's Buffalo Jump. Theatre Passe Muraille's 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, or Rex Deverell and Geoffrey Ursell's Black Powder, for example--the fact that Act I is mainly exposition of the problem suggests that the playwright does not trust that the audience itself will know well enough the figures or general historical situation giving rise to the specific conflict. In addition, the long setting up of issues and characters gives the writer more scope to depict what she sees as the drift of history.

What Glorious Times They Had is subtitled "a satire," and is meant to be staged in the style and tone of a burlesque. The target is "a system of government which was attempting to preserve a situation based on myths and preconceptions about roles of men and women" (Grant 18). Centrally, Grant and company focus on the political assumption that women needed and got the protection of men, the guiding principle of Roblin and Fletcher. Who, we are left to wonder repeatedly throughout the first act, is to protect women from their protectors? Roblin is portrayed much as McClung herself described him, a "Gentleman of the Old School" (Stream Runs Fast 101), in a play that reduces such male attitudes largely to the expression of a debased "chivalry."

The play opens with a line quoted from the Dominion of Canada Elections Act, a line delivered, symbolically, from out of the dark by a male voice: "No woman, idiot, lunatic or criminal shall vote" (E7). McClung's opening speech is an attack on the attitude behind the law: "People still speak of womanhood as if it were a disease" (E7)--an affliction that (from the company women keep within the Act) seems to be partly mental and partly moral. Her speech also raises the central theme of "protection" and introduces with scorn the image of the chivalric ideal, discrediting it even before Roblin appears to personify this ideal in word and deed. The opening also characterizes the women as literally and figuratively all of one voice and, presumably, of one mind, as they join in a Women's Christian Temperance Union song, "Win Them, Win Them, One By One," then further demonstrate their closeness by finishing each others' sentences in unison, and by sharing in-jokes.

In contrast is the following scene between Roblin and Fletcher in a park. Roblin seeks reassurance that things are as they should be, asking "There aren't many men who would cheat their wives out of their share of the property, are there?" and "My God, a man is forced to support his wife, isn't he? What more does she want?" (E 11). Roblin presses the issue of harmony in the home, basing his stand on openly misogynistic biblical admonitions from Paul, requiring wives to submit to their husbands. Fletcher follows, doubting the ability of women to vote, based on the false equation between head size and intelligence. While they indulge in such thoughts, McClung passes, carrying a suitcase. Roblin "chivalrously" doffs his hat in respect, but neither "gentleman" offers to relieve McClung of her load.

Much of the first act illustrates how women are not protected by the prevailing attitudes and the laws based on them. Examples include a woman who cannot save herself and her children from a drunken, violent husband, because of the limitations of the Married Women's Protection Act; insurance policies that do not extend the same coverage to women as to men, for the same premium; and factory girls who are forced to work in filthy, unsafe conditions because factory inspectors do not do their jobs. These last two are documented in McClung's autobiography, but Grant and company alter the details and chronology to help characterize McClung as a resourceful, self-reliant and capable activist. Historically, McClung discovered and protested the inequities of the insurance policies _after_ she had visited Roblin to offer advice on women's issues. In the play, this comes earlier, laying out more of the problem before McClung begins to lobby the premier, and displaying what will become her characteristic instinct to go straight to the source of the problem, in this case by vowing to make this an issue at the next insurance convention in Winnipeg. A few scenes later, when she does address the convention, however, we do not hear her speaking on the subject of the policy inequities, but on the Elections Act. The vow to speak with the insurance agents, and the actual subject of her speech, foreshadow her later vow to Roblin to make votes for women an issue in the next provincial election.

Similar changes occur in the dramatization of McClung's visit to the factory. As McClung tells the story, it was a Mrs. Nash who managed to persuade Roblin to accompany herself and the younger McClung on an inspection tour of factories. In the play, McClung initiates the trip, and takes along the younger Beynon, arguably eliminating an extra character and a casting problem, but also dramatically enhancing McClung's image within the play as the primary instigator of necessary action. Roblin, of course, does not see any problem with factory conditions--until he is himself almost severely injured because of the poor lighting and the loud noise as he gallantly and solicitously "escorts" McClung and Beynon. When McClung suggests that perhaps a woman might do a more conscientious job as a factory inspector, Roblin asks, with a mild oath, "What the deuce, madam. What on earth could a woman do?", to which McClung answers, ironically, "She could begin by taking the Premier on a factory inspection tour" (E33). Her own such tour seems a success when Roblin refuses to go any further with this tour, but promises to "see Fletcher first thing in the morning," implying changes will be made, though as Grant's own audience must have known, such "changes" left and leave much yet to be done.

In addition to the issue of protection, the scene introduces the related issue of why women work at all. Roblin is just as McClung describes him, a man who believes that women work not from necessity but to buy a few little luxuries. He assures McClung and Beynon, in terms taken straight from McClung's account, that "most of these young factory girls just want to get out of the house and earn a little pin money" (E29), and that men are the main providers. The historical moment reflects directly on attitudes towards women in the workplace still voiced today. We see some of the reality that belies Roblin's assurances as the "Girl" accused by the manager of causing the near accident cries that she cannot afford to lose her job and sings another Temperance song of the period, "Father's a Drunkard, and Mother is Dead," to explain her predicament. The message of the song is clearly meant for the audience, not for the Premier, who has already left the stage and factory by this time.

Act one ends on another scene based on an incident from The Stream Runs Fast, as McClung meets again with the Premier, in his office--a place Fletcher says she has no right to be. Characteristically, Roblin upbraids Fletcher for his lack of a "sense of chivalry" (E 37). Roblin's own behaviour is absurdly condescending as he serves McClung tea and gets her to autograph copies of her books--for his wife. McClung turns the meeting sour when she insists on raising issues such as how unfair the laws are to women, while Roblin tries to keep things light and social, and to deflect the discussion, responding merely "Sugar?" (E 37). When McClung presses her point and asks to address the cabinet to make them also aware of the problems, Roblin tut-tuts her claims and offers some chivalrously insulting advice: "Take it from me. (Intimately) Nice women don't want the vote" (E 38). When she insists that they do, he dismisses her, in spite of her warning that he is sending away "the best advisor you ever had" (E 39). Roblin appears, in light of history, a fool when he claims "Madam, the rights of women is a very minor issue," to which McClung replies, with history on her side, that "by the time the next election rolls around, the rights of women will be a very major issue" (E 39). When he asks if that is a threat, she replies in a line McClung herself used at this meeting: "No. It's a prophecy." McClung and her associates them spend most of Act two making this prophecy come true.

Act two begins in the offices of the Political Equality League. Frances (sic) and Lillie Beynon prepare for a meeting with Roblin and the Legislative Assembly, to lobby for votes for women, knowing they will be turned down. The advance knowledge, however, gives them a weapon. Predictability, or "automatism," as Bergson has termed it (81), is a highly vulnerable target for comic imitation and attack, and the Legislature, particularly its leader, is highly predictable. Because they can predict the government's response, the women can prepare in advance a response of their own. Lillie suggests a burlesque, a "Mock Parliament" like the one she has just seen in Vancouver. Through it they can present an inversion of the situation they will face in the Legislature, a burlesque that will allow them to satirize the attitudes behind the responses they can anticipate. They will play it the night after the visit it will parody.

The confrontation in the Legislature, Grant notes, was well described at the time, so the scene "required only editing and shaping" (17). Part of that "shaping" involves a witty stage metaphor; the "Members" of the Legislative Assembly are represented by balloons, suggesting they are mere playthings of the Premier and his attitudes. Roblin, whose theme music in this act is "The Maple Leaf Forever," looks to the Mother Country's example in dealing with the women's suffrage issue--and like any figure in Canadian drama after about 1965 who expresses an allegiance to things English, clearly puts himself on the wrong side of things. Roblin speaks of women's proper sphere of influence, the dinner table, trumpeting grandly that "woman suffrage would break up the home. It would throw the children into the arms of the servant girls" (E48). Grant and company could have used even more documentary sources in this scene, using Roblin's own recorded words of the time to drive home the play's own imagery and themes: in newspaper accounts at the time, Roblin is reported to have refused to reply to some of the suffragists' arguments because "the chivalry which was inspired in me by my mother bars me from making answer. . ." (Savage 87, emphasis added). Perhaps it was the reference to his mother's responsibility for these attitudes that made the speech rhetorically undesirable within the play. As the scene progresses, Roblin and Fletcher appear increasingly perplexed by the way the women cheer Roblin's speech as he denies the women everything they want. Knowing what the women plan, the audience can relish the irony of the scene, and join with the women as they wickedly applaud Roblin's performance.

Action switches to the Walker Theatre where the Mock Parliament begins. McClung introduces the premise for her audience: ". . . for the next short while, positions in society will be reversed. The women will have the vote and the men will have to beg for it" (E49). The theatre effectively becomes the place where the women can "enact" their revolution. What follows is not a re-enactment of the original Mock Parliament, the "Parliament of Women" McClung and her associates staged on January 28, 1914, however.

Grant could find no script of that performance. What she and her company get to put on instead is partly a recreation based on newspaper accounts and, in part, also a parody of events and attitudes as the company has already dramatized them. Furthermore, perhaps in keeping with the overall polarized view of society presented within this play and the determination to make women the successful enactors and attainers of their own success (though equally possibly for reasons of economy), the recreated Mock Parliament excludes men from the stage, although in the original, men "were not only well represented in the audience but participated in the entertainment itself" (Prentice, et al. 193).

The relationship between the framing play and the Mock Parliament is evident from the first line: "No idiot, lunatic, criminal or man shall vote" (E 50), a line that echoes satirically the opening line of the framing play. Furthermore, the pattern of the Mock Parliament is much like the pattern of the framing play up to this point. Early scenes set the "problem," leading to a climactic confrontation between the leader of the "Franchise for Fellows Society" and the "Premier," played by McClung. The idea, Grant says, was to create a situation where women acting in the roles traditionally assigned to them could staunchly defend a status quo that denied the vote to men, basing their arguments on how political activity would interfere with men's ability to exercise their traditional responsibilities. Women "in power" would "denigrate men and their qualities" the same way that men in power already did women and their qualities (Grant 18).

After the spokesman has made his eloquent plea, ending with "We have the brains, why not the vote?" (E32), McClung emerges grandly from behind her newspaper, where she has been hiding and ignoring the debate. She delivers a speech that captures all the condescension of Roblin's own dramatized reply to her the previous day as well as a speech that draws on reports of McClung's own speech in the actual Mock Parliament. Nellie prefaces her reply by commenting on the "splendid gentlemanly appearance" of the male delegation, but then proceeds to reject their petition. Parodying Roblin, she explains how she wants to keep men on their pedestals and away from the "unsettling business" of politics. After all, she concludes, "unsettled men mean unpaid bills, broken furniture, broken vows and divorce" (E54), recapitulating several problems that plague women even into the present.

As the "reviews" the next day proclaim, the Mock Parliament has triumphed as an entertainment satirizing the "system of government as it exists today" (E55), and, by extension, attitudes in 1974 that parallel the situation from 1914. This play-within-a-modern-Canadian-feminist-historical-play not only satirizes the attitudes, but as a piece of theatre it demonstrates how theatre by and for women can help serve the interests of women, and reminds women that there is a tradition--a history--of this kind of theatre within the country. In spite of the reviews, and its evident success in making votes for women an issue, the Mock Parliament has little immediate effect on the political situation within the play, other than to harden Roblin in his resistance. Fletcher carries in the balloon Assembly, and manipulates them so that they vote against women's suffrage once again. This is a fairly accurate reflection of the historical event, and, perhaps, an unintentional signal to Redlight's own audience of the limited immediate potential of political theatre: such theatre can expose issues, but it cannot necessarily change minds already set. Real change comes about, as the play goes on to demonstrate, from direct political action. McClung and her followers begin to work for the Liberal Opposition, which has promised that, if elected, it will bring in votes for women.

Her direct participation exposes McClung to public anger as well as public acclaim. When she is burned in effigy, the government issues an apology, attacking the work as that of a "hoodlum element," rather than as what it is, an extreme expression of its own position. Roblin's hand appears in the apology when it speaks of the "ordinary chivalry of manhood" that would shun such behaviour (E60). The next scene presents an example of that "ordinary chivalry" in action, as Fletcher lies to two women on the train about McClung and her connections with the Liberals. Using an "ad feminem" approach, he paints an unpleasant picture of her background and appearance as a way to discredit her ideas, then says she is a bad mother, ignoring her "seven or eight children" to the point that Fletcher's own sister often has to feed and clothe them. Grant and company use this exchange to show how repressive systems sometimes sow the seeds of their own destruction: Fletcher's efforts backfire, when the two women doubt his overly black portrayal and make plans to go to McClung's speech that night in Brandon. Nellie, who has been sitting behind Fletcher the whole time, thanks him for his efforts in "drumming up business for me," and sarcastically asks him to thank his non-existent sister for "all her kindness to my children" (E65). The scene, which except for the identity of the male antagonist is essentially faithful to the incident as McClung describes it in The Stream Runs Fast, foreshadows the eventual downfall of Roblin's administration because of more serious examples of corrupt behaviour.

In a scene that successfully captures the tone of the election, as described by historian W.L. Morton--"a contest between the past and the future" (Manitoba: A History 337)--Roblin becomes maudlinly drunk while discussing with Fletcher the curious phenomenon of women winning so much support from men in the province. Fletcher even wonders, comically, if women are perhaps exerting pressure by "withholding their conjugal rights" (E66), something even Roblin cannot believe. Still, evidently the split in society runs along lines other than sexual, though the play itself has essentially divided the conflict along those lines up to this point, grounding women's problems in the political differences between women and men. Roblin's questioning of the matter might be a cue to the audience to consider the matter as well, but if so it is a token acknowledgement of a historical reality that does more to point out a gap in the society and political spectrum of the drama than to balance the issues.

Roblin proclaims his decision to run on his formidable record, and as he recapitulates his "achievements," the scope of his conservative, static clinging to the past--not just on votes for women, but on a wide range of issues--becomes clear. One of his proud claims is that he "put the British flag in every schoolhouse in Manitoba," a claim that shows his "Old World" attachments, in spite of his talk of being a dreamer and a visionary. Comically, he proclaims that "beneath this breast beats the heart of a son of the desert" (E67), and breaks into a romantic song that makes laughable his sense of chivalry.

Ideally, if history worked the way a well-crafted melodrama works, the election, in the past and in the play, would have ended in triumph for the forces of the "future," McClung and the Liberals, and in utter defeat for the forces of the "past," Roblin and the Conservatives. Unfortunately for Grant and company, they come up against one of the limitations of history as a source for an ideal dramatic model: it does not always conform to literary or dramatic conventions. Roblin wins the election, as he did historically, albeit with a considerably reduced majority. This brings the play to its rather problematic ending. The Liberals do come to power, as the result of a string of scandals and a record of mismanagement of the public purse force Roblin to resign. Whatever Grant might have wished, historically the Liberals never did win an election based on a platform of votes for women.

The final scene contains a rhetorically confusing element involving the symbolic exchange of flags that accompanies the change of order. Roblin enters carrying a British Union Jack, while his successor, Norris, enters carrying the Canadian Ensign. The flags would seem to express their "Old World" and "New World" allegiances. However, they then exchange the flags, which would seem to indicate that Norris inherits or adopts some of Roblin's attitudes or attachments, or that coming to power in Canada meant (or means) becoming a servant of the Old Country. Still, regardless of what the exchange of flags might suggest, Norris does conclude the play by proclaiming votes for women in Manitoba, ushering in a new era in Canadian politics.

Perhaps as a way to combine celebration of a success with a theme of continued effort, and to craft a triumphant dramatic ending out of the inconvenience of history, the play concludes with the women once again singing "Win Them, Win Them, One By One," and McClung advising: "Never retract, never explain. Get the thing done and let them howl" (E74). This has the ring of a victory reprise, suggesting that "they" have finally been won over to the women's cause and that the thing is "done." What, then, has become of the issue of protection? or of the issue of Temperance? or of occupational safety?--issues the play has raised, but ultimately not addressed. Or are the song and advice an exhortation to continued, or renewed, effort to get all of the problems solved, "one by one"? By ending on what appears a call for action, Grant and company seem finally to suggest that while gaining votes was a positive shift in the situation for women and for Canada, much remained and remains to be done. While the ending does celebrate briefly a triumph, it also invokes a continuity between past and present, a continuity that, as "unfinished business," remains to be broken up through continued appropriate action. Theatres such as Redlight exist, after all, because problems of social and political equality for women remain. There would be little point in trying to politicize people to solve non-existent problems, or to get them to accept a history that provides a model to follow to solve problems that the model claims to have solved. The closing scene, then, invokes that continuity between past and present identified by Lindenberger as an essential of historical drama, while at the same time the scene proclaims, in a Brechtian to "New Leftish" way that the continuity can be and must be broken.

Where The Fighting Days differs most significantly from What Glorious Times They Had is not so much in the period studied, or the focus on Francis Beynon rather than McClung, though both of these are important differences, but in the conflicts that it looks into. Where What Glorious Times They Had suggests that women's battles are to be fought exclusively against external, male-dominated forces of conservatism, conflicts in The Fighting Days arise from the dynamics between, the different options open to, and the political differences among the women within the suffragist movement itself. As she explains in an interview with Judith Rudakoff,

> The Fighting Days was a play that could just as easily have turned into an uncritical celebration of the great old dolls in the Canadian suffragette movement if I hadn't had a certain built-in suspicion of sacred cows. (44)

What Grant and company had presented as a uniform and unified voice becomes a fragmented voice as Lill confronts some of the strains within the positions debated within suffragist movement, against a broader political and historical backdrop, where votes for women is merely one of the major issues of the day--war and conscription being others of import.

What attracted Lill to Beynon and the others was her realization that in reading the record of what they said, "I could have been listening to my friends talk." There

> really was a similarity between the kinds of things I am interested in and what those women were interested in: the discussions about the war and pacifism, the discussions about women's rights. . . . Women haven't really come that far in some ways. (Mitchell, "A Feeling For Our History" 18)

What Lill calls "discussions" often appear in the play as debates between prominent members of the suffrage movement over the direction and the distance they should go, debates marked at times by strongly divisive differences of opinion.

Although Lill did considerable research and uses material straight from the writings of the period, particularly the writings of Beynon and McClung, she does not consider this a documentary, but, rather, a historical drama (Mitchell, "A Feeling" 16). That is, she sees the play as more fictionalized, a period piece based on historical characters and events, rather than an authenticated documentary recreation of "historical reality."[18] At the same time, as becomes apparent below, major scenes do rely heavily on published documents for dialogue. The fictionalizing of Beynon includes Lill's use of plot line, characterization and dialogue from Beynon's novel, Aleta Dey. Lill at times makes her protagonist from Beynon's, incorporating material from the novel into the play as events from Beynon's own life, with no acknowledgement or indication to the audience that this mixing of fact and fiction is going on. This use of fictional material as "history" is not necessarily playing freely with fact, however. Readers such as Ramsay Cook and Anne Hicks have noted that, given her politics and her appearance, Aleta Dey is herself a fairly thin mask for Beynon, in what is in essence an autobiographical novel.

The first act of The Fighting Days covers virtually the same period as is covered by What Glorious Times They Had, but from a different perspective, as Francis arrives in Winnipeg and comes under the influence of the suffragist movement and the powerful rhetoric of Nellie. To emphasize the growth in her main character over the course of the play, Lill makes her Francis considerably less experienced and educated than was Beynon, while compressing the time she spent in contact with the movement. Beynon had been a school teacher in rural Manitoba for several years before arriving in Winnipeg in 1908 (not 1910, as in the play). She worked for several years as an advertising copywriter for Eaton's before being hired as women's editor for the Grain Growers Guide. Her columns in that paper are an important documentary source for this play, as they deal with the daily lives of farm women across western Canada, from issues of housekeeping to matters of birth control and financial and political self-reliance. In the opening scene of The Fighting Days, Lill brings an innocent young Francis straight from the farm to Winnipeg following the death of her domineering father (where Beynon's father had been moved to Winnipeg for his health in 1902). Lill has Francis' older sister, Lillian, already an established journalist, describe the wonders of the city, and Francis is particularly attracted to the idea of the libraries and the opportunities to learn more than was allowed by her father. Partly to help undo the damage done by this restrictive patriarch, it seems, Lillian also suggests Francis join her suffrage club: Francis does not even know what one is. Her education into issues and political action over the next few scenes serves to educate the audience as well about the issues and personalities of the period. Again, it seems, the playwright could take nothing for granted in her audience's historical knowledge--or dared leave little to chance in trying to establish both a dramatic and an historical setting.

The education begins at the Women's Press Club, with Nellie leaving a speech on which she has been working to draw out the shy Francis about herself. Their conversation not only brings them closer together as they find sisterhood in shared ambitions and dreams of getting beyond their allotted stations from rural, female backgrounds, but it gives the audience a chance to hear how girls were raised and not quite educated in earlier times. Francis admits she would like to become a newspaper writer, like Nellie and Lillian, but admits she has never found herself having anything to say. Part of the drama that follows in the first act traces the finding of her personal voice and message under the encouraging guidance of her mentors in the suffrage movement. Nellie emphasizes that women now have an opportunity to write of and for each other, so have "no one to blame but ourselves for not doing what we want" (16-17). This line begins to set for the audience standards against which to judge what women in this play do, and where to assign responsibility for any failings--not with men who will not give them the opportunity, but with themselves for not capitalizing adequately on each opportunity.

There is, however, in the early scenes a hint of the kind of polarized, "melodramatic" opposition between men and women found in What Glorious Times They Had. The first hint in, as suggested above, in Francis' memories of her father. The second, and more important, is in Nellie's descriptions of the only male character in the play, the insufferable McNair, editor of The Rural Review. The names of both the paper and of its editor come from Aleta Dey, rather than from Beynon's career, where her editor at the Grain Growers Guide was George Chipman. From Nellie's description, McNair seems to be the same sort of stereotypical opponent to women's issues that Roblin and Fletcher were in Redlight's play. She terms him a "wart on the nose of progress" (13). someone who stands rigidly and oafishly against change, while the women work energetically and imaginatively for progress.

Scene Three opens with Nellie giving the speech she was working on in Scene Two. Much as her speech on protection and chivalry did in What Glorious Times They Had, her speech here sets the issues and standards against which to judge future events of the play. She calls for democracy for women and argues that since it is women who "set the standards for the world, . . it is up to us, the women of Canada, to set the standards . . HIGH" (18). In particular, she selects pacifism as a desirable objective, claiming that women will "refuse to bear and rear sons to be shot at on faraway battlefields. Women need the vote to bring about a better, more equitable, peaceful society . . . " (19).

Immediately following this speech, McNair enters, and behaves much as one would expect, making insulting remarks about the spectacle of seeing a woman speak in public. He gets into an argument with a Francis considerably less shy than she had seemed in female company alone: Francis defends her friend and her speech, not even knowing at first to whom she is speaking. One notable feature of his language throughout this passage is his habit of using belittling language when referring to women and their work, as, for example, when he says of Lillian she is "not a bad little writer" (21), and when he addresses Francis as "little Miss." McNair's verbal habit reinforces Nellie's assessment, as this scene cements the audience's original impression of him as the voice and personification of the opposition.

Once Francis learns McNair's identity, she notes some of the deficiencies she sees in his paper. When she hears he needs a new women's editor, she boldly suggests he find someone with "more modern ideas" than the last (22), someone like herself. He hires her, in spite of her lack of experience, apparently because of her innate good sense and instinctive, forthright manner, qualities emphasized (even created) by Lill's compression of the time between her arrival and her hiring.

The next few scenes move between Francis' work at the paper, where she gradually acquires confidence and a sense of purpose, and her growing association and friendship with Nellie McClung. Sometimes the two come together, as when Nellie and Lillian help Francis to answer questions from her readers. From the tone and content of the letters, the column answers a need among rural women for a forum where they speak of their hopes, fears and loneliness. McNair, in his role as stubborn, anti-feminist (or at least anti McClung) male, criticizes Francis for passages in her column that echo too much of Nellie's vocabulary. He worries that Francis, in her pursuit of political dreams, has forgotten things like "mothers and babies, ginger snaps and peonies" (34). McNair makes an consistently negative impression throughout these early scenes at the paper, giving Francis a corresponding opportunity to build an ever more positive impression. This she does, for example, when in response to his "ginger snaps and peonies" remark, she suggests to the sceptical McNair that "women's issues" go beyond those he dismissively assigns them to include "cruel husbands and fathers, . . . hypocritical ministers, [and] war-mongering politicians" (34). When she asks McNair why, if he believes a woman's place is in the home, does he hire a woman to write for his paper he replies with a calculatedly oafish "What self-respecting man would want to write about 'women's things'?" (35). The only problem he has right now, he grumbles, is that Francis does not seem interested in writing about "women's issues," either.

As the argument progresses, Francis finds herself once again fighting for Nellie's reputation, defending her as being "at the forefront of the suffragist cause" (35). This claim draws from McNair an outrageously negative: "She is a dilettante and a debutante. And a hypocrite. She's an upper class snob who wouldn't have given my poor mother the time of day." When Francis protests that Nellie is fighting for votes for women, McNair retorts, "For women who don't need the vote. For women who've got something better than the vote! Influence! And furthermore, the proper lineage!" (35). He draws particular attention to the absence of names like "Lewycky, Schapansky and Swartz" (36) from the membership roles of the suffrage club. There is apparently just enough truth in his attack that Francis has to admit that there might be a few members who "don't feel comfortable with all the strangers in our midst" (36), an assessment that later historians have affirmed:

> For their part, Anglo-Saxon women seem generally to have been unwilling to accept immigrant women's initiatives, thereby ensuring that the Canadian reform movement remained a middle class phenomenon. They tended to exclude non-Anglo-Saxon and working class women, although they were not necessarily unresponsive to their concerns. (Prentice, et al. 185)

Within this play, Francis emerges as the "not necessarily unresponsive" voice, as she declares her belief in "democracy for all women" (36). She is also certain that time will change the minds of the less liberal members of the movement--substantially affirming that there are class and political differences within the movement, as McNair has claimed, while not agreeing to align Nellie on the less democratic, more exclusive side. The affirmation introduces a level of complication not found in What Glorious Times They Had, and begins to force the audience to question the easy, polarized gender assumptions that these early scenes had seemed to establish as the grounds for conflict within the play.

What had first appeared as typically one-sided characters continue to change into more complex personalities, and complications to grow, as Francis explains to McNair why she feels attracted to women like Nellie, and to the suffrage movement. In a passage taken largely from Aleta Dey, Francis tells how her self-confidence had been crushed in childhood, and how she had learned to defer to authority, to the point that she still cowers when McNair comes into the room. Women like Nellie and Lillian have shown her that it is possible and desirable to stand up to authority and to challenge it. A surprisingly positive side of McNair emerges as he sympathizes with her and her fears. He offers to "look in" on her once in a while, and, perhaps equally surprisingly--although Lillian has teased Francis on the subject of McNair earlier--she accepts his offer.

Turning back to her column, Francis explains that she wants the vote "because a vote is like being given a voice where before we were silent. It's like being set free after years of captivity," and she asks her readers to write and tell other women "what freedom means to you" (39). Many replies agree with her, others add calls for amenities like a public restroom in town, or for birth control, to avoid the large families women seem doomed to bear. One voice, however, from a bigot using the name "Wolfwillow," takes the same position against "foreigners" (or non-British Canadians) that McNair has attributed to Nellie's brand of suffragist. "Wolfwillow's" standards sound a note that echoes (ironically) against attitudes in Mitchell's The Shipbuilder, but even more prominently in the "Race plays" discussed in Chapter Five, below, especially in the "immigrant experience" plays.

In reply Francis again takes her stand in defence of foreigners, but this time she does so in public. Her reply gets an enthusiastic endorsement from Lillian, and an ominously cool one from Nellie, who calls it an "idealistic little piece." The dismissive, belittling turn of phrase echoes McNair's earlier belittlement of women in general, a belittlement that should signal to the audience another conflict within the drama, this time within the movement. Nellie pointedly declines Lillian's repeated invitations to share her own enthusiasm; instead she makes the first reference to the war talk going on in Europe, and notes how the very countries where some of these foreigners are from are "rattling their sabres at Britain even as we speak"

(43). This is the first indication that Francis and the audience have that she and Nellie are not in complete accord, and that there is more to McNair's accusations than mere male antagonism to a strong woman.

Nellie is not the only one unhappy with Francis' position of the "foreigner" question. A group of readers writes demanding that Francis be fired over that column. McNair visits Francis to tell her of the letter, and to take a stand for freedom of the press and for her right to hold and express her opinion. At this point Lill turns to Aleta Dey for a scene that allows more of the private "Francis" to emerge. Just when she and McNair begin to find grounds for something more than a convivial employer/employee relationship, he notices a "Votes For Women" sash for an upcoming suffrage parade, and all of his anti-feminist bile spills forth. Ironically, he begins to sound a bit like Nellie in his anger, as he takes an anti-immigrant stance, saying that, given the world situation, there are more pressing problems than votes for women. Francis idealistically maintains that the push for votes for women cannot be dropped just because countries cannot get along. She ends by accusing him of being the impossible man she had been warned against, while he says he would never allow his wife, if he had one, to behave as she does. Francis dismisses McNair "with a melodramatic sweep of her hand" (50), assuring him that, if she had a husband, she would never allow him "to substitute his conscience for mine." Both the lines expressing their respective positions, and the gesture of dismissal, are taken verbatim from Aleta Dey: indeed, all of this romantic interplay between Francis and McNair is a fiction, and not based on any known romance between Francis Beynon and George Chipman. In addition to giving Francis more chances to develop and display her private character, this rather fiery romantic attachment has as its eventual purpose to give Francis another dramatic choice, one not evident in the historical record.

The differences between Nellie and Francis appear smoothed over as the final scene of the first act begins with the two women joining to celebrate the progress made by women in Manitoba. Lill moves Beynon's "fighting days" column from January 1, 1913 ahead to late 1914, putting it in a more ironic context. Just as she proclaims her joy at being alive in these days, and her faith that the "thousand conflicting interests . . . will work themselves out in the end to the final good of the race" (by which she must mean the human race), the suffrage music gives way to military music and a drill sergeant's call of "Company, halt" (51). His command seems aimed as much at the women as to any soldiers. The range of conflicting interests has just expanded, and the idealism of the earlier pacifist rhetoric is about to face a serious test.

As the second act opens, in 1916, the issue of democratic rights becomes increasingly problematic,as the extension and exercise of democratic rights in a time of war becomes the central issue in dispute. When Francis says that all the military preparations and activity seem somehow pointless, Lillian reminds her that the boys are "fighting for democracy," the very thing the women have been fighting for throughout--even before the war. Lillian wishes her pacifist husband, Vernon, would not be so outspoken in his anti-war sentiments, but Francis reminds her that freedom of speech is one of Vernon's democratic rights. More seriously, democratic rights become the grounds for conflict between Francis and Nellie, as well, as Francis finds herself increasingly disillusioned over how ineffective women have become in combating the war and militarism, and over how confused women seem over the issues and how to use their new power of the vote. Nellie stridently seeks to protect Canada's "British" moral standards against possible degradation by foreigners, while Francis continues to maintain that democracy knows neither race nor gender.

Lill ignores the fact that McClung had by this time moved to Edmonton to bring the two women face-to-face on several occasions in scenes that incorporate into the dialogue ideas and phrases culled from their written exchanges over such issues as conscription and the Wartime Elections Act. The first of these scenes is at a a Press Club Christmas party to which Lill brings all the characters to concentrate issues and conflicts that had developed over time and distance. There is a distinct tension in the air; Nellie's husband is at a patriotic drive, while Lillian's is at an anti-conscription rally. There seems no safe topic of conversation, and soon McNair and Nellie are fighting again. He finally calls her a hypocrite for advising the Prime Minister to exclude foreign women from the vote in the upcoming election. Both Francis and Lillian are shocked at the news, but Nellie dismissed their concerns by saying she suggested the exclusion merely as a "temporary war measure" (71). Francis recalls for Nellie, and for the audience, the words of the speech we heard earlier, calling for democracy. McClung adopts a "that was then, this is now" attitude. She points out, in words taken by Lill from McClung's letter to the Grain Growers Guide, 24 January, 1917, page 132, that "there are districts where almost every single English-speaking man has enlisted. The moral tone of the electorate has drastically changed." She maintains, in language that would do credit to Roblin in What Glorious Times They Had, that the "only way to protect our . . . traditions . . . is to limit the vote to Empire women." Francis challenges Nellie's position, asking whether foreign women do not have the same traditions, "Justice, love, equality. How can you turn your backs on them . . . if you truly believe in women?" (72). Nellie's real concern emerges when she answers that the problem is that some of the foreign community does not believe in conscription, a move she supports because she fears for her son, already overseas, and because she sees conscription as a way to shorten the war and to bring about victory. She has, as Francis notes, simply worked to deny democratic privileges to people who disagree with her--a most undemocratic act. Where the original "good versus bad" conflict was between those for and against extending the democratic franchise to women as a group, the conflict has shifted to one between those for votes for all women versus those for votes for only some women, with Nellie the focus of conservative attitudes, and Francis the focus of progressive, as measured against peacetime standards raised within the play's first act. Lill in effect makes Nellie the personification of a prevalent problem and attitude within the women's movement during the war, when, as the authors of Canadian Women: A History note, "only a few Canadian women sustained their pacifist opposition to violence" (Prentice, et al. 207). Nellie's own personal dilemma might earn her some sympathy; however, when she abandons her own "HIGH" standards, she becomes a negative force and someone whom Francis must fight, as she does in her next column.

While many of the words and sentiments in the section of The Fighting Days are documentable, there are notable shifts in chronology, as well as one major omission that bears on Lill's dramatization and fictionalization of events. Beynon, in a column entitled "The Foreign Women's Franchise," 27 December 1916, had challenged McClung's advice to the Prime Minister. In the play, this is the column Lill has Francis write after the argument at the party. Lill then follows the column with some of the replies, including one from "Wolfwillow," already established in the first act as a bigot, agreeing with McClung's position. With Nellie in such company, within the play, Francis and the audience must face the measure of truth in McNair's formerly "outrageous" estimate of Nellie and the suffrage club. In the Grain Growers Guide, Wolfwillow's reply was on the same page as McClung's own, on January 24, 1917. The important piece Lill suppresses from McClung's letter, for dramatic purposes, is this:

> Because I place woman suffrage above all personal considerations, and because I know that any one person's judgement is quite liable to be faulty, I will withdraw the suggestion of a partial franchise.

Of course, the damage had already been done, as the government did, in fact, bring down legislation excluding foreign women. The suppressed parts of that letter suggest that, historically, McClung was more consistent in holding to her peacetime principles than Lill makes Nellie appear in the play. In making her character less flexible than her historical counterpart, Lill engages in a practice going back to the origins of the historical play in the English Renaissance: she alters her material to suit doctrinal and dramatic purposes (see, for example, Ribner 49 and passim).[19]

Where the action of the first act had been to build up Francis' circle of friends and supporters, the second act shows the fragmentation of that circle. The first to leave are Lillian and her husband. Vernon's fate foreshadows Francis' own. He has lost his job because of his anti-war activities, and he and Lillian are heading for the United States, to New York, where, as Francis stoutly observes, "democracy still means something" (78), and where, Lillian hopes, Vernon will once again be able to write what he believes. An interesting by-play at this parting once again shows up the differences between Francis and Nellie. Francis brings Lillian a volume of poetry by the American Carl Sandburg, Nellie one by the English Kipling.

Lill incorporates some of McClung's attempt to reconcile the division between herself and Beynon in this scene, as Nellie assures Francis that "there'll be a vote for everyone. Believe me, just like we've always dreamed. When the war is over" (80). Lillian recognizes this as an apology from someone who has temporarily lost sight of the dream, but Francis rigidly adheres to her ideal and her condemnation. She is, as Lill puts it, "someone whose hero 'fell short'" (Mitchell, "A feeling" 18), and someone who cannot forgive, or even attempt to rationalize, apparent failure. Speaking, perhaps, for some in the audience, Lillian admonishes Francis for turning her back on a friend and teacher, "Just because she didn't meet your high standards" (80). This exchange raises an interesting dilemma for the audience. Are standards relative? Who, if anyone, is in the right in this conflict? Francis becomes rather unattractive in her own defence when, in response to Lillian's prediction that she too will change when she has a family to claim some of her loyalties, she coldly replies, "If that's the price of love, I'm not sure I can pay it. I want to be free, Lily" (81). Suddenly, Nellie's fall from her own high standards seems more acceptable, given the inhumane, isolationist price in personal terms of maintaining the "freedom" to pursue such standards.

Lill, however, continues to make it difficult for her audience to choose sides easily, as she shifts sympathies in such a way that no character is consistently "good" or "bad." Indeed, while she admits to "a strong attachment to Francis" (Mitchell, "A Feeling" 18), she accommodates both positive and negative reactions as viable points of view. We can sympathize with either Francis or Nellie, or with both, at different times, for different reasons. Right after we have been given a chance to reflect on the apparent coldness of her personality, we get a scene where Francis reveals her own self doubts, and in which McNair reassures her that her problems stem from the fact that she has "a vision of the world that's clearer than most" (82), swinging some sympathy back her way, given that such a vision can be a troublesome burden.

The next thing to go for Francis is the support of her readers. Letters against her pacifist position and support for foreign women begin to dominate, until, finally, one contains an apparent death threat, or at least a threat to shut her mouth for her if she will not shut it herself. The audience is now asked to react much the same way she reacted when Vernon was threatened for exercising his democratic right to freedom of speech. Whether or not we agree with her idealism, or are comfortable with her personality, we are challenged to at least support her right to hold an opinion and to express herself without fear for her life or safety. McNair, the one-time supporter of free speech, tells her she has gone too far, if she is bringing such threats down on herself--he lets his affection for her compromise his ideals the way Nellie let hers for her son compromise her ideal. And just as she did with Nellie, Francis reminds McNair of what he had said on an earlier occasion, under different circumstances. Francis consistently refuses to make allowances for the altered circumstances and their effect on public attitudes and behaviour.

She gets a direct experience of the effect when she confronts Nellie at an election rally at which Nellie speaks out for conscription and Francis tries to encourage women to use their vote to end the war and to make a case for pacifism, the old ideals. She raises a difficult moral point when she asks "How can our boys be fighting for freedom if we are not giving them the freedom to decide whether or not they'll give their lives?" (86). Nellie's answer is a model of sophistry, when she suggests that "sometimes, individual freedom has to be sacrificed for collective freedom" (86), raising the question of how a collection of unfree parts can constitute a free whole. Francis continues to cut through the logical inconsistencies, finally giving a speech that echoes Nellie's own from Act One. The audience for this speech, however, is unanimously negative and hostile,as a woman's voice yells at her to "GET OUT!", and Nellie confidently, perhaps even smugly, tells Francis, "You have your answer" (87).

Finally, Francis is ordered by the censorship board to cease writing against conscription. In a line adapted from Aleta Dey--though in the novel the word "Canadian" appears where Lill uses "British"--Francis asks McNair, "Since when have British citizens relinquished the right to discuss unmade legislation?" (89). The alteration adds the irony of using Nellie's "British" standards as a defence against abuse of those standards. Looking to McNair for support, Francis discovers that he has come in to tell her she is fired, at the insistence of the publisher. She naively protests that even in war you cannot suspend freedom of the press and of expression, in spite of overwhelming evidence that "you" can, if you have the power and public support. McNair makes one last attempt to save Francis from herself, telling her to "let it all go," and offering marriage so he can "take care" of her. This is the closest Lill gets to the "chivalry" so prominent in What Glorious Times They Had, but Lill's purpose seems to be to show that Francis had choices, and compelling options open to her. Her answer to McNair is typically Francis: "McNair, I love my work" (91).

In a play that invites its audience to understand that public issues are best reflected in shades of grey, Francis remains a character who steadfastly holds to a melodramatic "black and white" coloration of events and ideals, someone whose values can be summed up in that 1960s slogan "If they're not with you, they're against you." The Fighting Days confronts its audience with the matter of the limits to such absolutist sentiments, while at the same time asking that audience to consider the implications of someone with Francis' "clearer vision" losing the fight for public opinion. Francis' last column, which closes this play, speaks again of her ambitions for that column, and for women, and looks for a time when it will not be a crime to be different, an ideal that indicts her opponents, the democratic majority on this issue. As such prophetic statements usually seem to do, this one invites Lill's audience to evaluate its own time as a realization of that prophecy.

As did Vernon and Lillian, and do so many other "losers" in Canadian historical plays, Francis sets out for the United States, to continue her work towards a a more tolerant, peaceful future. In effect, she becomes a "scapegoat" figure, related in fate to Jaanus, who does not fit in to the society around him, and is "cast out" for his "failure." Lill asks her audience to understand that, no matter how unpopular or inappropriately idealistic she might appear for her own time, when popular opinion drives Francis Beynon's character and moral vision out of the country, this reflects negatively on the country then, the same way that the audience's reaction to the dramatized life and its consequences reflect on present standards of tolerance. Lill herself has suggested that Beynon would be just as unpopular today as she became in her own, because people would consider her "shrill and opinionated" (Mitchell, "A Feeling" 18). Lill even admits she would find Francis Beynon an unpleasantly intense person to be around. Maybe, Lill seems to conclude, and to invite her audience to conclude, the reason that discussion on public issues sounds much the same, whether it is contemporary or from the records of the Winnipeg suffrage movement early in this century, is that public attitudes toward and tolerance of difference have not made much progress in the intervening years. That is, morally, "we" are not any further ahead than "we" were in 1917.

What Glorious Times They Had and The Fighting Days clearly succeed in making prominent dramatic heroines out of their protagonists, as part of a similar objective to inform the public and at the same time to reform public opinion. However, while both want women, in particular, to know of the successes and failures of women in Canada's past, to look to the past for useful models and to recognize barriers to fuller success in furthering women's issues and intersts, they have decidedly different views of just what those successes and failures consist of. It seems clear, for example, that even if Lill knew of the Redlight play, she did not buy its simplified version of events, though even she, dealing with the internal complexities of the women's suffrage movement, eventually seeks to call on a perception of the "right" and "wrong" of history as a measure of success or failure within the movement of history. Both, finally, leave audiences to consider the work left to be done, and challenge the present to finish work begun in the past.

Finally, in making Francis a scapegoat to a racist society, Lill not only creates a feminist play, a play on women's experiences, but a play that might arguably also fit into a discussion of plays based on "race conflicts," the subject of the next chapter. Where Redlight Theatre's work, and some of Lill's, especially her first act, celebrates the positive legacy of the past, Lill's second act concentrates on the negative legacy, the unfinished business of unpurged moral shortcomings, handed on from the past. This negative legacy is, as Chapter Five shows, commonly the focus of Canadian history plays of "race conflict."

CHAPTER FIVE:

Racial Conflict in Canada

Historical plays dealing with the relations between various races in Canada break down into two broad types: those dealing with first contacts, or relations between European society and the aboriginal people and detailing a "history of invasion and oppression" (Goldie 5),20 and those dealing with the experiences of later "immigrant" people. In either case, the essential conflict is between an established culture and an arriving one, and in either case, in recent years, the European, or as it most often seems to turn out, the "English" half of the conflict is cast in the role of villain, of aggressor, or of oppressor.

i "First contacts" plays

To borrow terminology from Abdul R. JanMohammed, the "first contacts" plays take on aspects of the "Manichean allegory" that places light and dark skinned races in a binary opposition based on the "putative superiority" of the one and the "supposed inferiority" of the other (63). Furthermore, they exemplify the "contemporary" face of this pattern, as described by Terry Goldie, in which "the opposition is frequently between the 'putative superiority' of the indigene and the 'supposed inferiority' of the white" (10). Such a pattern represents a considerable change from plays of the late nineteenth century, plays like De Roberval, in which the tiny French colony (striving, in the peculiar rhetoric of the play, to become the forerunner of a successful English-speaking country) tries to scratch out a foothold in New France in the face of physical hardship and a hostile native population, albeit one with some token legitimate grievances about the way the French are muscling in on their hunting grounds and frightening away the game.

De Roberval and Charles Mair's Tecumseh both feature loving and loyal native women, attractive to and attracted by white men, and both of whom step in the path of missiles meant for the hearts of their lovers: in Tecumseh, Iena, disguised as a man, takes a bullet for Lefroy, while in De Roberval, the faithful and resourceful Iroquois maiden Ohnawa, who has been a source of an amazing range of geographical, historical, anthropological, medical and other information for the governor, steps in front of an arrow meant for him. This characteristic act of sacrifice indicates the main dramatic mode at work in these plays, the melodramatic, where, in one common pattern schematized by James L. Smith, some loving "Amelia" lovingly intercepts a bullet meant for some heroic "George" (44). The sacrifice of so much innocent virtue helps establish the worth and virtue of the cause for which the sacrifice is made. In Iena and Ohnawa, furthermore, we also see one of the two main traditional images of the "indigene," that of the comely maiden who is an object of temptation. In the skulking Lowering Eye, whose arrow kills Ohnawa, we see the other "traditional" image, the object of fear (Goldie 15).

The melodramatic pattern is played out again, with a significant variation, in Wilfred Campbell's Daulac (1898), a numbingly predictable, pseudo-Shakespearean verse drama that works up to the fight at the Long Sault. The battle becomes the setting for a final, romantically heroic tableau in which the hero, "the most chivalrous figure in Canadian history" (Campbell 127), his loving Helene lying dead in his left arm from a gunshot to her breast, stands alone, sword in hand to face the murdering Iroquois (object of fear, not to the heroic Daulac, but to the audience). In Daulac there is no "dusky maiden" to fall in love with and die for her white man, and subsequently no suggestion of a possible rapprochement between the white conquerors and the aboriginal people. In Daulac the Iroquois are not just fearful, but the personification of unqualified evil, a large, powerful threat to the small, struggling colony of Montreal, in another of the "David and Goliath" conflicts so popular among Canadian historical playwrights of both the past and the present.

However, in the 1967-82 period under study, playwrights prefer to reverse the respective roles of aboriginal and white, to make the European "Philistines" (in both the allegorical and, at times, the Arnoldian senses of the word) the powerful threat to small, struggling populations or villages of Beothuks, Hurons and Blackfoot, in James W. Nichol's Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons (1974), Herschel Hardin's The Great Wave of Civilization, and Michael Cook's On the Rim of the Curve. In developing the conflict between the superior native and the inferior white, they follow somewhat in the tradition of Coulter's Riel plays, as does Rod Langley's Tales From a Prairie Drifter (1974), a more recent portrayal of the Metis confrontation with imperialistic Canada. Langley's play, with its Brechtian epic, presentational style, differs in form from Coulter's Riel and its mix of Renaissance chronicle and traditional martyr play conventions, but keeps its sympathies firmly on the side of the Metis.

The intended audiences for all of the "first contacts" plays, written by white playwrights and portraying the manifest inferiority of the European or the white North American system, are white, rather than native. The objective of what emerge as indignant or radicalized white liberal playwrights seems to be to make the complacent white, and probably liberal, audience squirm for the sins of its ancestors, usually with an associated objective of exposing and changing the racist attitudes these oppressions rested on, and that continue in the present. There are, however, other objectives discernible behind this obvious confrontation with a history of oppressive racism. Nichol and Hardin in particular develop the experiences of the Huron and the Blackfoot as examples of a more "national" issue, the problem of maintaining cultural integrity and sovereignty against threatening outsiders, while Cook provides a more "regional" treatment, drawing specific parallels to current Newfoundland social inequities.

In that all three plays examine the physical and cultural genocide committed against the aboriginal people, if not in their authorship, they move in the direction of what Thomas King calls "polemical" literature. As he defines the term, polemical literature on the aboriginal experience

> refers to that literature either in a Native language or in English, French, etc. that concerns itself with the clash of Native and non-Native cultures or with the championing of Native values. [Polemical literature] chronicles the imposition of non-Native expectations and insistences (political, social, scientific) on Native communities and the methods of resistance employed by Native people in order to maintain both their communities and cultures. (13)

However, perhaps because none of these plays is written by a Native writer, and because none is written for a Native audience, in building its particular version of this aboriginal / invader conflict to focus sympathy on the aboriginal side, none addresses seriously the "pre-historic" period of aboriginal history as a thing apart, and none offers up a successful resistance or a model of successful resistance to be followed in the future against the ongoing assault on the cultural and phsyical integrity of aboriginal life. Instead, aboriginal society and culture, whether Huron, Beothuk, or Blackfoot, comes into play as essentially static, representing ideals eradicated by the cultural and economic importunities of the European. In this, these plays are somewhat of an anomaly among the plays in this study in that they depict the negative side of change, where most tend to look to change as the answer. In developing a sense of this ideal past, all three of these writers use two other common features of the literary image of the "indigene" listed by Goldie: indigenous peoples are more "natural" and in harmony with the nature and the land, and they demonstrate a taste (if not always a talent) for inflated oratory. While Nichol, Hardin and Cook all also make reference to native religion, none makes a major issue of native mysticism, the remaining cliche feature in the literary image. The main conflict is at a concrete cultural level, where the general pattern is to show a self-contained, self-sufficient "Golden Age" culture thrown into a state of violent, unnatural flux by the arrival of "Old World" values and interests that compete unfairly and ruthlessly against this idealized, natural "New World."

While Nichol and Hardin in particular do not ignore the fact that there was a sometimes violent and bloody aspect to these cultures, they tend to play this violence with an anthropological eye, showing it as part of a natural and necessary order, and not as part of some self-serving, hypocritical order. Bloody tortures and all, the "innocents" of recent years are the "savages" of old.

As the rather static presentation of the aboriginal state suggests, the focus is not so much on the Native (or aboriginal) resistance but on the European incursion and "attack." This conflict between old and new, between aboriginal and imported, however, creates potential dramaturgical problems. These same ideal, "superior" cultures have to have a weak point, a point of susceptibility to the white man's blandishments, yet one that does not let the aboriginal culture or its representatives appear either too willing or too vulnerable, since that would tend to devalue the ideal. It would not do, for example, to have the noble savages too readily willing to buy or trade for their material benefit, or too willing to throw over their communal, tribal traditions to pursue personal benefit and aggrandizement through individual skill as hunters and trappers. That would suggest there was a latent pool of selfishness and greed lurking beneath the social veneer, waiting to express itself. The aboriginals must be shown to be seduced away from the ideal, misled from without, rather than from within. A common solution, used here by Nichol and Hardin, is to show the natives being tricked; societies where none lie cannot deal with the level of corruption, hypocrisy and deceit of a race schooled and practised in craftiness, or even of out-and-out treachery.

Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, first performed at Theatre London in 1974, is a variation of the martyr play, tracing the search for fulfilment of the Jesuit Father Rejean, or "Blackrobe", as he appears in the script. His mission among the savages of New France leads to a spiritual crisis as he comes to recognize and accept responsibility for the shameful results of that mission. The play thus presents an interestingly complex look at the problems as encountered by both the native and the "invading" cultures. In this, it anticipates somewhat Brian Moore's novel Black Robe (1985). Both centre on fictional Jesuit missionaries with martyr complexes, who have come to the New World to save the savages and, perhaps, achieve martyrdom. Both also find the reality of martyrdom less splendid than the ideal as contemplated from the relative comfort and safety of home. Moore's novel spreads the temptations more broadly, as his Father LaForque undergoes a long, arduous canoe trip that separates him from any spiritual help from his superiors, and exposes him to physical temptation among the libidinous savages who are his guides and "protectors" on the journey. LaForque's first duty on arrival among his charges is to bury the putrifying body of his martyred predecessor, sent to glory by a hatchet in the brain.

Nichol's play follows the essential martyr play requirement that the play "must center itself in the martyr's inward development" (Lindenberger 45) by providing Blackrobe, whose favourite childhood game was to "play martyr," and to practice various positions and attitudes of martyrdom, with a spiritual guide in the form of an early Roman martyr who entered his mind via a Book of Martyrs that was his constant childhood reading. "The Martyr" strives to keep Blackrobe focused on the main objective of his mission--personal martyrdom, although at times Blackrobe debates the worth of his pursuit, sounding at times like Eliot's Beckett in Murder in the Cathedral, who worried about doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.

Nichol's Blackrobe is spared the canoe trip in a play that compresses fifteen years of the Sainte-Marie mission into two hours on stage, and compresses a generation of missionaries and martyrs into a few representative examples. The action opens with his first day at his mission, and ends with his death at the hand of a raiding Iroquois warrior after years of missionary work and disease have left the Hurons too weak to protect themselves or their French "allies."

The Huron view or response comes mainly through two characters, the "savage" but "senatorial" Broken Rock (15), and the noble and sensitive Sleeping Water. Through Broken Rock, Nichol gives his audience a Huron perspective on this comic "half-wit" weakling of an outsider who has been forced upon them by a threat against their trade with the French. Nichol sets up the Hurons as innocent victims of French imperialism, as Broken Rock sneers at the one-sided benefits of a trade that takes Huron furs in exchange for "useless bits of metal" (17) in a scene that ignores any benefits, material, political or military, that the Hurons themselves might have expected, or did at least temporarily derive from the alliance. While Nichol requires a historical ignorance or willing blindness from his audience on this point, he almost immediately calls on that same audience's knowledge of history, expecting them to see the prophetic wisdom of Broken Rock, who responds to the claim by his friend Sleeping Water that this stranger seems harmless enough with the warning: "There can be harm in all things" (17). Broken Rock appears prescient, given what the audience might know of the eventual fate of the Hurons. Nichol further calls on a rudimentary knowledge when he creates a Rejean who is suspiciously evasive about his plans when asked by the Hurons. The audience has to know in advance what those plans are, and be put off by the evasiveness and covering up. Broken Rock provides Nichol's audience access to aspects of Huron culture and mythology, establishing the natural ideal. Broken Rock listens to Blackrobe explain the Genesis story of God's creation of the earth. He then sneers and in what is effectively an aside recites the Huron myth, the "true" story of creation.

Where Moore's LaForque was exposed, in several senses of the word, to the temptations of the scandalous (by his standards) sexual behaviour of the Hurons, Blackrobe must confront what appear to him the fearsome corrupt beliefs and satanic rites of his spiritual charges. His major temptation comes in the form of an immoral call by his superiors for impressive statistics. They want large numbers of baptisms to impress the bureaucrats back home. Blackrobe resists, seeking true conversion from the satanism he sees all around him before he will baptise. Sleeping Water, confused by Blackrobe's warnings and sermons, but impressed by the strength of Blackrobe's spirit, is his first convert.

Act Two creates an ironic link between the rising numbers of conversions and the declining numbers and strength of the Hurons, who "convert" because, as in Black Robe, they are told that the disease attacking them is God's punishment for their failure to come to the new and true faith. This, finally, is their point of susceptibility: disease makes them fearful, and fear makes them vulnerable. Since their own spirits or gods are ineffective and cannot protect them from this mysterious killing illness, they embrace the one that promises the protection they crave. They fall victim to a lie.

Eventually Blackrobe, painfully conscious of the destruction his mission has worked on a formerly strong people, confronts "The Martyr," who has just congratulated him on the "success" of "their" mission and admonished him against thinking too much of this world when "their" goal for Blackrobe, glory in the next, is so close at hand. Blackrobe protests with bitter sarcasm: "But death and I have walked through this land, arm in arm. Just count the souls I've sent to heaven! I am a saint!" (76). In a final moment of doubt he complains of seeing nothing of the work of Jesus in the chaos around him, then, with a rather cliche whisper of acknowledgement of a possible Providential plan beyond his understanding, he fails his final spiritual test by expressing a lingering doubt as he surrenders his soul "to darkness. . . or to You" (77). "The Martyr" screams in disappointment after the departing Blackrobe. Rejean has in turning his back on the Roman's spirit rejected not only an unworthy spiritual model but on an unworthy historical role model, an "Old World" guide trying to extend the influence of an inappropriate, hypocritical system into a "New World." In preparing himself for death, Blackrobe does not offer himself as a martyr to his Order or to the social and cultural order behind it, but accepts responsibility and offers himself in retribution for the harm he and his kind have done. The central achievement Nichol asks his audience to celebrate through Blackrobe's choice is that of repudiation.

The final scene combines horrific brutality with symbolic irony, as Broken Rock "baptises" Blackrobe into his own particular martyrdom in a shower of boiling water as the Iroquois close in on what is left of Sainte-Marie. Blackrobe's savage baptism represents an ironic reversal of roles as Broken Rock, the one hold-out, the spokesman for and advocate of cultural resistance, works his revenge on the force that has brought his once-proud people to such a disgraceful end. The Iroquois complete the "martyrdom" by impaling Rejean on a long knife.

In a final, pathetic tableau, Sleeping Water looks over the bodies of Broken Rock and Rejean, and wonders what he is now, in his solitude:

> Not Huron, for they don't exist. Not Christian, for they have fled. The fever has lifted, and like a man who cannot die, captive in my broken land, I breathe, I open up my hands and eyes . . . I live! (79)

In his reference to the fever breaking, Sleeping Water suggests that in addition to fear there was a second point of weakness that had made the Hurons vulnerable: delirium.

To what purpose does Standing Water live, and facing what future? His fate is a warning in a play that provides for its audience two "heroes" as role models to counter the forces that might transform them into "Sleeping Waters." Blackrobe is in the "low mimetic" mode, "one of us" in effect, who shows the way by rejecting inappropriate social or cultural guides from his "own" past. Broken Rock is more in the "high mimetic" mode, a leader--or potential leader--whose people do not follow his example, to their eventual destruction. There is a strong suggestion in the end that, given more Broken Rocks, the Hurons might have been better off, and remained as strong as their traditional enemies, who, within the rhetoric of this play at least, rejected the Jesuits and Christianity, and retained their pride and strength.

As much as Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons is a play about a conventional martyrdom gone positively wrong, about repudiation of a corrupted system, it is a play that celebrates the worth of cultural resistance to "imported" standards that can only infect and weaken a society. It can be read with specific racial reference to the harm done aboriginal cultures, or it can be read more metaphorically, to refer implicitly to any resident population whose autonomy and way of life is under attack from an insistent "outsider," no matter how unthreatening it may appear. That is, the play combines warning against inappropriate "received" cultural standards and against the potential dangers of new standards trying to "export" themselves. The warnings can also be read to extend to the danger of mixing economic and political ties with social and cultural. Read within a "national" framework, Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons serves as a cautionary tale furthering the ideals of cultural nationalism.

Hardin wrote his Brechtian epic The Great Wave of Civilization, in 1962, but it was not first performed until the 1976 Lennoxville Festival. It traces the rapid collapse of the Blackfoot Confederacy, under pressure from the whisky trade. From a strong community of generous and integrated sharers of collective wealth and property, they crumble into a weak array of greedy, individualistic free enterprisers who, pursuing the illusion of personal power and material wealth, destroy the buffalo herds that were the birthright of all. Hardin has explained that, despite the specifics of the historical conflict,

> my reasons for writing The Great Wave of Civilization had nothing to do with Plains Indians at all. They had to do with my feelings about American domination of Canada and the American liquor trade of Montana moving up into Canada. Plains tribal society was effectively a warrior/parliamentary society. I found this to be

> a beautiful example of the penetration of a southern society with unvarnished commercial motives, into a northern community. I had very definite didactic and historical reasons for writing The Great Wave of Civilization. (Wallace and Zimmerman 22)

To make his didactic and historical points clear, Hardin uses Brechtian introductory captions as narrative links as well as to introduce and summarize the action and implications of what will follow. He is also Brechtian in his choice of projected song titles, such as "The Song of Consumer Disease," or "The Dirge of Vanishing Profits" to describe the ideological implications of the song. Hardin's "deliberately Brechtian" (21) style, however, does not make the metaphorical connections between past and present clear. Paul Thompson explained to Hardin at the time of the play's first production that, to make that connection with the present in a properly Brechtian way, the play should have used "big political placards about multi-national corporations in Canada" (22).

Hardin's Blackfoot, perhaps in part because they are not his primary interest, remain little more than "Stage Indians," as Don Rubin described them in his review of the Lennoxville production ("Focus on the Festivals" 130). As such, they "appear as either noble or drunk and . . . speak in much the same way that Stage Indians have spoken since they first appeared on our stages, that is--strangely." Hardin gives the Blackfoot a poetic, oratorically inflated style that he calls "high-theatre language" (Wallace and Zimmerman 22), a style that becomes so painfully obtrusive that it becomes tedious and even runs the risk of becoming unintentionally comic, much as similar language does in plays such as Andras Tahn's Jacob Kepp (1980) or Ernie Carefoot's lamentable Matonnabee (1980), both produced by 25th Street Theatre.

While his interest might not have been specifically in the Blackfoot experience, Hardin still has to develop an idealized culture to be swamped by the insidious invader from the south. Given the specific nature of the "weapon" used by the traders to undermine that culture, Hardin faces a greater challenge even than does Nichol in creating an allowable cultural susceptibility among the Blackfoot: it would be almost racist cliche to make men like Little Dog merely easy prey to alcohol. However, Hardin has to deal with the historical fact of the speed with which the Blackfoot adopted a culturally destructive practice. He cannot let the collapse rest on some latent selfishness or natural physical weakness among the people themselves, so he makes them unwitting victims of a systematic poisoning, first of the body, then of the mind, then, finally, of the culture.

The poisoning begins with the recipe for "trade whisky" in Scene Two. Anyone who drinks the witches' brew cooked up by Snookum Jim, a brew containing little actual alcohol but plenty of other ingredients to turn the stomach as well as the head, will clearly be in danger of losing his mind and his life. When Little Dog unwraps his medicine bundle and prepares to battle the spirits in the jug with the Great Spirit of his people, the audience already knows from the mixing scene, if not from history, that Little Dog is over matched before he takes his first drink. A battle that he thinks is occuring on a "spiritual" level actually is fought physically, literally at a "gut" level. Before the day is out, in his attempt to overthrow the undeniable evil of the drink he has killed a friend and traded a wife, showing how rapidly the drink corrupts, or poisons, basic social values and confounds virtuous motives.

The trader/Blackfoot interchange is the final, though not the only, abusive link in the chain of commercial pressure Hardin demonstrates. He also shows how middle-man suppliers such as I. G. Baker, who tells a sad tale of how he is himself squeezed by even bigger monopoly capitalists to the east, puts "independent" traders like Snookum Jim into a squeeze between high priced supplies and a dwindling supply of buffalo hides. All the "businessmen" in this play are essentially broadly-drawn caricatures personifying greed, selfishness and the corrupt profit motive. The profit squeeze, which makes the likes of Jim even more rapacious and desperately determined to protect their own margins, and which eventually rests on the ability to exploit the Blackfoot even further, is the driving force of Baker's version of "progress" (67), and the focus of Hardin's didacticism.

"Progress"--as defined and pursued by the proponents and agents of the "commercial principle" that is Hardin's real target--does not serve any properly conceived form of "civilization." This is clear from the way commercial activities undermine a thriving culture based on generosity and mutual benefit. While Hardin seems most interested in exposing and satirizing the commercial principle that turns the Blackfoot against each other, the "warning" here is not so much against cultural as economic domination, of selling out a birthright for illusory gain. The cultural implications of such a sell-out are clear enough in a play that in tone and theme anticipates the Free Trade debate of the late 1980s. By the time Little Dog kills Snookum Jim the damage is irreversible, and the surviving traders safe within their fort "cheer and guffaw" (110) at the spectacle. In a final song, "The Song of a Single Generation," Bird Woman sings of how a culture has vanished within such an amazingly short time, and of how it cannot be reclaimed because the resources and the wisdom upon which it rested are lost forever.

Hardin's focus on and interest in the dangerous ideal of progress is one reason that Rubin finds that the evil white men are "the only interesting characters Hardin has created" ("Focus on the Festivals" 130). There is the hint of a Miltonic, Paradise Lost aesthetic at work here. While the woodenly orating victims become tedious, the gleefully scheming oppressors retain a perverse fascination. They act. The Blackfoot, except, perhaps, Little Dog, are acted upon. The naive, foredoomed Little Dog, for all his painful verbiage, is another in the line of Canadian cultural martyrs, a potential leader, or high-mimetic hero, who fought (albeit inappropriately and ineffectively) to retain and protect his people and society gainst a dangerous outside interest.

On the Rim of the Curve, first performed for the 1977 Newfoundland Drama Festival, is one of three plays Cook has based on the history of Newfoundland, and as such may also be read along with the others, Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust (1974) and The Gayden Chronicles (1978) as examples of "regional" history playwriting (although The Gayden Chronicles uses St. John's harbour more as a convenient rather than a necessary location). Conceivably, all three might also be treated as plays dealing with class conflict. Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust considers how the ruling and merchant classes manage to survive and keep their hold over the poor, even in times of "conquest" by "foreign" nations, while The Gayden Chronicles examines the causes and effects of mutiny and class unrest in the British Navy in the early nineteenth century, at a time when Romantic ideals of revolution and individualism were beginning to take hold. On the Rim of the Curve also deals in part with commercial exploitation, not of the poor, as in Colour the Flesh, but of the Beothuks, the now extinct aboriginal people of the island. The play, which asks its audience to consider, among other things, the linkage between the victim and the victimizer, and works out the "pattern" of their mutual destinies, builds its own pattern from a mixing of epic and absurdist dramatic models.

The epic, with its episodic structure and its linguistic, temporal and physical flexibility, Cook identifies as "probably the most natural and truest expression of what is occurring in this country" (Wallace and Zimmerman 161) for its scale and its ability to "expand" emotions and perspectives. The epic machinery first appears in a character named "The Author," who goes about "checking the characters against a script, making sure they're all there" (9), then, sounding rather like the narrator of Rudy Wiebe's "Where is the Voice Coming From," delivers prefatory remarks to the audience about the difficulties of writing of a vanished people. The play develops through a grotesque circus atmosphere, complete with the Ringmaster who presumes to speak for the audience and who joins with the audience in a supposed taste for carnage and a supposed self-righteous indignation at the unclean, immoral ways of the Beothuk. This character also announces the various turning points the show has reached: the prologue, the acts, and the non-existent "intermissions" in a play that allows no breaks between acts. Cook relentlessly confronts his audience with the vulgar, obscene and brutal behaviour of both courtiers and commoners from the past who revile, rape and murder the Red Men.

Also in line with epic practice, the white "characters," particularly the furriers and the "Businessman," are caricatures much like Hardin's, developed to display and attack the "moral" force behind the brutality. The Businessman also serves to bring the past and present together and to show that what caused the slaughter in the past is still a force in the present. As he witnesses a re-enactment of an "Indian hunt" he comes to the same conclusion as the furriers, that the intended female victim is a filthy and immoral savage, and accordingly makes the decision that allows the hunt to be played out to its murderous end. His decision shows that there is an element of the past and its attitudes still functioning in the present. The murder removes a source of fear and also of possible temptation, since the woman can no longer seduce the workers and so possibly interfere with the orderly exploitation of the resources of the island. Cook later has the Ringmaster point out that the attitude displayed by the greedy and manipulative Peyton towards the Indians and established "authority" is the same that later generations of his moral descendants in the twentieth century have displayed towards the miners at Buchans. The pattern of victimization, and its moralistic underpinnings, is a constant. Only the identities of the "players" change.

Contrasting the coarseness of the English is the dignity and the "natural" spirituality of the Beothuk. Their entrances and passages are often accompanied by simulated bird cries, and their general style of speech, like that of Hardin's Blackfoot but not always to the same extremes, is poetic and oratorical. However, the issue here is not the "cultural genocide" of Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons and The Great Wave of Civilization. There is no concerted attempt to seduce the Beothuk to a new order, although Gilbert's abortive use of dancers to attract the Beothuk to the beach to trade has traces of this element. This scene may better be read as a warning against the abuse of "art" to seduce the gullible into commercial exploitation. What in the play is ironically referred to as the Beothuk "failure to adapt" is nothing less than their inability to avoid the consequences of racist attitudes and assumptions on the part of their persecutors, attitudes and assumptions that treat the Beothuk as "fair game" and identify them as suitable objects for target practice. The genocidal assault against them is purely physical: they must, according to the prevailing morality, be destroyed to remove an evil and fearful blot from the face of the earth in order to make the island safe for civilized development and settlement.

The absurdist element, partly a product of Beckett's influence on Cook (Wallace and Zimmerman 165), appears in the distribution of characters on the set, and, in the final "act," in the fate and complaints of the furriers. The set is a series of curving risers intersected by access ramps. The Beothuks stand at the outer edge, literally and figuratively on the rim of the outermost curve. In the final act, the Beothuks' backs appear to block escape into oblivion for the furriers, who find themselves, therefore, trapped in a limbo where they cannot stop themselves from endlessly repeating the murders. Here in the circular trap there is an echo, perhaps, of Sartre's _No Exit_, as well as of Beckett's works, with their images of entrapment or inability to move on or to let go.

Ultimately, however, Cook owes more to the philosophy of the epic tradition than of the absurdist. He does not wish to suggest the impossibility of escape from the round of abuse and destruction. In fact, his essential rhetoric goes even farther back, and echoes strongly of Dickens' _A Christmas Carol_ in a key exchange between the ghosts of Peyton and of a Beothuk. The Beothuk shows Peyton that what impedes the killer's progress in the afterlife is the burden of his guilt, a burden he created for himself during his lifetime, and one he cannot pass off. While Cook wants his audience to feel guilt or anxiety about the "mistakes" of the past, he also wants it to recognize and to change in itself the attitudes behind these "mistakes." Escape, therefore, must remain possible and immanent, but only for those in the present who do not commit the same type of self-entrapment or create the same types of burden.

The Beothuk themselves cannot "pass on" until the last of their kind, Shanadithit, dies without falling into the whites' last trap. In an overwrought scene where the poetic language of the exchange does become painfully intrusive, Shanadithit explains her loneliness and the appeal of the soft words and gifts the whites have offered in return for information. Apparently repeating the words used to try to seduce her, she explains that she has been "chosen to be / the book of my people," the one who can

> . . . render up
> the mysteries of word and faith,
> [and] chant , in a strange tongue
> our mythologies. . . .(47)

Her ancestors, however, persuade her not to betray them, not to give away their secrets and the secrets of the land to feed the whites' hunger for information, so she ascends the ramp and passes on in the embrace of Demasduit and

Nonosabasut.

The Ringmaster re-enters noisily, reads the obituary of Shanadithit from The Times of 14 September 1829, remarks on the line "supposed to be the last of the Beothuks" with the bold affirmation "Supposed to be. She was. We made no mistake about that" (50). The show ends ironically, with the Ringmaster extolling the audience to "tell your friends about us. Without your support, we'd never keep a show like this running . . ." (50). The ambiguous reference to "a show like this," of course, refers both to the theatre and its need for supporters, and to the "show" of oppression and abuse that can only continue its run with the tacit or overt agreement and support of the public. It is a final call for change and reform of the moral order Cook sees as the driving force of a regional history of abuse. Where Hardin uses the epic form and historical example to warn his audience to be careful collectively, as a cultural whole, Cook, more in line with Nichol and his repentant Blackrobe, uses them to exhort his audience to be morally responsible individually.

ii. "Immigration" plays

The negative characterization of an established Anglo-European society is also a feature of recent plays about immigration, or attempted immigration, into a Canada that sees itself as the offspring of European (or, more specifically, of English and French) founding nations. In particular, the immigrants run into interest groups seeking to protect the British Imperial connection and the belief that Canada must be a "British" as well as a white country. As has been the case in plays about early contacts between indigenous peoples and in-coming European or white societies, this negative characterization of Canada as xenophobic is a departure from an earlier, though slighter and more recent tradition of plays dealing in part with immigration.

Immigrants, especially those honoured as "pioneers," appear relatively recently in Canadian historical plays. Minnie Harvey Williams' The Romance of Canada (1923) is perhaps the first to celebrate the contribution of the "pioneer" settler, particularly the "pioneer mother," and to acknowledge the mix of nationalities going into the settlement of "The West." However, all her settlers are welcome, all are white, and all look to the future. Welcome also (except among each other) are the immigrants who turn up in plays like Reaney's Donnelly trilogy or Peter Colley's The Donnellys; even if their old sectarian tensions inflame a "new" land, nobody representing "Canada" or Canadian immigration policy actually questions their right to be here. Similarly, though the immigrants found in Paper Wheat, or Black Powder: Estevan 1931, find themselves in conflict with established power structures like the Grain Exchange or the coal mine owners, no one denies them the right to be here. Indeed, they are a necessity for the continued existence of those very power structures that abuse them for cheap resources or cheap labour. To this extent, some of these "immigrant plays" are also "class plays."

There is, however, a small group of plays, represented here by Theatre Passe Muraille's Doukhobors and Sharon Pollock's The Komagata Maru Incident and Walsh, that deal specifically with efforts by various federal governments, through their officials and law-enforcement agencies, to discriminate against or persecute immigrant groups already legally landed in Canada, or to exclude would-be immigrants and refugees.[21] All three follow a similar cause-and-effect pattern, but there are differences in focus. Doukhobors deals with the effect of policy on the immigrant group--a persecuted religious sect from central Europe--once it has landed in Canada. The Komagata Maru Incident looks at the effect of policy on the would-be immigrants--a band of Sikhs not even allowed to land--and at the same time invites the audience to consider the kind of agent, or enforcer, who makes such abusive policy possible. Both plays end up taking the side of violent resistance to authority. Walsh, as its title suggests, focuses more on the agent and the effect that enforcing an abusive policy has on him as an individual. Walsh is named for the North West Mounted Police officer who had to deal with Sitting Bull and the Sioux who fled to Canada from the United States after the battle at the Little Big Horn. Walsh himself comes to admire the people upon whom he must enforce the decisions of a goverment distant both geographically and morally from the local consequences of those decisions--decisions based on international politics between Great Britain and the United States. Both the agent and the would-be immigrants are eventually destroyed.

Where the "first contacts" plays above tend to serve as metaphors for the issue of cultural sovereignty and integrity, the "immigration" plays serve as a more specific indictment of Canadian domestic and foreign policy as practised in the "national interest" by the federal government, supposedly in the interests of the constituencies it claims to represent. All three invite their audiences to consider the things done "in their name" historically and provide reasons to reject such actions.

Doukhobors (1971) was the first Theatre Passe Muraille collective directed by Paul Thompson after he became artistic director of the theatre, and, as such, ranks in his estimation with the better-known Farm Show and West Show as one of the three most important of the fourteen collectives originated by Passe Muraille in the 1970s (Perkins, "Theatres maintain connection"). It was, for example, the first time Passe Muraille had had to deal with the problems of defining and forging a group for a collective project, and of researching, gathering, and then discarding information in order to attempt to create a coherent play. The result, Thompson admits in the "General Notes" that accompany the published version,

> isn't a well-made play. We were too involved with our material to cut it. This is one of the things that goes along with this kind of collective work; it's no longer a piece of art, it has a life of its own and there are things that have to be there and you just know they have to be there. (1)

Documentary material in the play includes scenes from Olive Dawson's book My Days Among the Doukhobors, the memoirs of a Nelson area school teacher; songs taken from a Canadian government publication called Songs of the Doukhobors, and two scenes originating in Simma Holt's Terror in the Name of God (1964), one a scene attacking Doukhobors, and the other the long monologue of Fred Davidoff. Holt intended this last as an indictment of the Sons of Freedom, but within the context of Doukhobors, it has, or seeks, the opposite effect. Other documentary scenes consist of narrative in which various characters "tell their stories." The "documentation" here is in the reportorial style and in performance, rather than in any acknowledgment of sources. The whole seeks to create

> an impressionistic approach to the Doukhobors. It wasn't the real Doukhobors. It was what we knew about them. We chose the title Doukhobors instead of The Doukhobors because we didn't feel that we knew enough to say "This is what the Doukhobors are about." It became "Doukhobors--what we knew about them as people living in Ontario." The point is--what do we know about Doukhobors? Basically the headline stuff. (2)

In creating this impression, on stage, the play uses such standard presentational devices as projected scene titles and multiple casting (for seven of the actors at least; one actor plays Peter Veregin throughout).

Doukhobors not only marks the start of the collective "Passe Muraille style" of creation and performance, it touches on the two main categories into which many critics, and Thompson himself (Johns, "An interview with Paul Thompson: 31), have tended to divide his later work: "history" plays and "sociological" plays. In exploring the historical roots and evolution of the Sons of Freedom, the most extreme and violently reactionary segment of the Doukhobor population in Canada, Doukhobors effectively traces the development of a sociological phenomenon. The action begins with Peter Veregin's tale of Russian tsarist persecution of the Doukhobors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly through demands for oaths of allegiance and conscription regulations that seem aimed specifically at the forced assimilation of the pacifist sect. It follows right up to the play's own present the experience of the Doukhobors who came to Canada at Canada's invitation, with promises of freedom to practice their religion freely, only to find those promises broken and themselves facing some of the same demands for oaths of allegiance, conscription and forced assimilation through the Canadian school system. The Doukhobors even face some of the same penalties in the "New World" that they faced in the "Old," such as imprisonment and loss of property.

In following the line of development to its most extreme expression in the Sons of Freedom, Doukhobors virtually ignores the mainstream Doukhobor population, the Orthodox and the Independent segments. In this choice, Theatre Passe Muraille allows a highly visible minority and their actions to dominate content and to define its view of Doukhobor society. Through selective shaping of material, following the more extreme response to "provocation" on the part of the Canadian government at each turning point in the Canadian Doukhobor experience, Passe Muraille presents Freedomite extremism as the "logical" and inevitable conclusion. Although the General Notes admit that there is a difference between the Doukhobor community at large and the Sons of Freedom sect, Thompson also claims, somewhat facilely, that it is "very difficult to divide the Doukhobors and the Sons of Freedom at times. There is a difference in one sense, yet there isn't in another" (1). Doukhobors themselves, particularly in the Kootenay valley, would probably not have that much trouble distinguishing, but it suits Passe Muraille's purposes to ignore such distinctions and to focus on the results of persecution and broken promises.

The play ends with a Canadian-born Doukhobor, Fred Davidoff, telling his tale of a life of resistance to persecution in Canada, and his reasons for becoming a member of the Sons of Freedom. Fred has spent twenty-eight years in prison for his beliefs, not because he wants to be in prison, but because prison is the place where Canada puts people like him, people who live by their principles and fight to maintain their freedom to do so. Beginning in school as a boy, Fred constantly has to fight off pressure to assimilate and to embrace such "Canadian" values as "patriotism, nationalism, and above all militarism" (38). It is his, and Thompson's, contention that the Sons of Freedom "developed as a result of the injustices of the Canadian government" (3). In a speech where the play finally equates "Doukhobor" with the most extreme element of that people, Fred declares:

> . . .if the Doukhobor people were left alone when they came to Canada like they promised us, there would be no such movement as the Sons of Freedom today. Through friction I was made into a Doukhobor and in spirit to be Sons of Freedom for the rest of my life. (39)

Fred's story takes on the force of a cultural myth, the story of a group destined to be persecuted for its beliefs and destined to fight on to defend its essential freedoms. In this, Doukhobors also establishes the characteristic Thompson/Passe Muraille fascination with discovering and staging the folk legends and myths of Canada.

Because it is mainly the "headline stuff" that forms the basis of the group's knowledge, it is the behaviour most often identified with this "headline stuff" that creates the most vivid stage images: fire and nudity, the most extreme expressions of Doukhobor protest. (The other possible cause and effect relationship here is that because the fire and nudity create vivid stage images, Passe Muraille gravitated towards this facet of Doukhobor behaviour. Certainly it is the facet of Doukhobor behaviour that most fascinated the press and, arguably, the Canadian public.) While the fire created some technical difficulties, including how to use it safely, the nudity in Canada's "first non-sexual nude show" (Whittaker, " Sexless stripping. . . .") created more cast and theatrical problems and had a greater influence on the final shape of the show. One woman in the original group was "unable to come to grips with the whole nudity question. She thought it was silly. So she left, because of that" (1). For Thompson, at least later, when he wrote the General Notes, this was just part of defining the collective. The other problem is that because stripping in protest becomes such a frequent action, the actors need time to get dressed again so that they can be ready for the next stripping scene. What results, in at times ingenious applications of documentary technique, is a number of thematic bridging or "transition" scenes, frequently comic, that not only expand on the sociology or history and characterize the confusion and dismay of the forces arrayed against the Doukhobors, but give the cast time to get dressed (or undressed) in preparation for the next scene. For example, Scene 20, "What's Your Problem?", begins with the "Captain Slade" scene, noting "This scene allows the actors to get dressed again after scene 19" (31). It also opens with a nude Captain Slade, rushing from a shower to answer his telephone, where a Doukhobor woman complains about police inaction in the case of a number of Doukhobors who were assaulted during a protest in Nelson. While two nude women remain singing onstage throughout this scene, those who have left to dress for subsequent scenes return by the end of scene 23, burning representative models of their homes while they again sing and disrobe.

On one important occasion, the dressing takes place onstage, with less thematic success. Following a brief "transition scene" of racist "children's rhymes" slandering the Doukobors, the actors gather around the nude figure of Paul, who delivers his own eulogy from his prison cell while his people dress around him. While the dressing does tend to further isolate him physically from the others onstage, the symbolism seems rather incongruous. Since he is nude while they are dressing, their action seems to imply a rejection of him and his actions.

Once dressed, the cast then strips in sympathy with Fred Davidoff as he tells his life's story. At play's end, the cast stands onstage, nude, "looking calmly at the audience" (37) in what amounts to a declaration of independence, an accusation and an implied solution: "if this makes you uncomfortable, remember, you made us this way; do not push us to it and we will stop."

This same theme, that Canadian government actions have on occasion pushed a peaceful people to violent, even murderous, extremes, emerges at the close of Sharon Pollock's The Komagata Maru Incident as well, when a Sikh "man of peace" finds it necessary to assassinate a Canadian Immigration agent for his actions in preventing other Sikhs from entering the country. Pollock even seems to see this as an almost inevitable consequence of such government persecution, and to invite her audience to sympathize with the murderer. Yet she had only a year earlier written in Walsh of an event where extreme provocation on the part of the Canadian government resulted not in violence on the part of the persecuted Sioux, but rather in a calm stoicism and a politically wise, though wasted, determination not to break the laws of the country. The measured and reasonable response of the victims emphasizes the already distasteful harshness of the eventual act of exclusion by the victimizers.

Although they are distinctly different in theatrical style, both The Komagata Maru Incident and Walsh deal with similar events, the starving-out of "undesirable" dark-skinned people from Canada. Both expose the personal suffering of those excluded, both show that the exclusion rests on broken promises, and both reflect on the mechanisms by which Canadian governments achieve their political ends. In this last case, both follow a pattern identified separately by Jerry Wasserman and Diane Bessai as common to Pollock's work. Wasserman, in the introduction to Walsh in Modern Canadian Plays, writes of how Pollock's plays, historical and contemporary, usually feature "a man or woman caught in the squeeze between personal inclination and political or family pressures" (139), while Bessai sees a typical Pollock "thematic thrust" in her decision "to confront the anonymous self-protective public systems for the way they force their lieutenants into uncompromising bureaucratic decisions" (Blood Relations, "Introduction" 8). Hopkinson, "Head of Intelligence, Department of Immigration" is for most of the play apparently a willing "lieutenant," just following orders. Major Walsh must choose between loyalty and duty to the government he serves, or to the friend he has made. Because of this dilemma, he becomes, briefly, a serious candidate for the status of "tragic hero," as he protests government actions until he receives orders to withdraw his criticsms and to apologize to the Americans. Walsh ultimately must choose between honour and self-preservation, and chooses "badly." Both of Pollock's agents, moreover, are similar to Nichol's Blackrobe, serving locally and in direct contact with the victims of policies made far away to serve the interests of distant governing bodies. Like Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons in that respect, they reflect on the painful personal consequences for the person who has to put into effect the decisions and policies made for the "good" of the greater body. Finally, these plays raise the question of just who decides what is or is not "acceptable" and "admissible" in Canada, and based on what criteria. As is frequently the case in Canadian historical plays, "Canada" is defined by those it seeks to exclude, and the principles of exclusion or exclusivity, both domestic and foreign, it enforces.

The Komagata Maru Incident is much the slighter of the two plays. Although she has identified several themes and considerations, more than the play can adequately deal with, Pollock seems most intent on registering her indignation at the episode, and on inviting the audience to share her reaction. Events are set in a Canada at the close of the era of "Canadian Imperialism," at a time when Canada is beginning to break the Imperial tie. The Sikhs aboard the ship have a legitimate Imperial claim; as veterans of the British army and their families, all are British subjects, and, strictly speaking, eligible for admission. Canada does not do itself proudly as it breaks from its Imperial obligations, devising regulations that, without actually making race the issue, effectively prevent immigration from India. Under one regulation, similar to one used by subsequent Canadian governments--right up to the present for those claiming refugee status--Canada does not admit people who have not made the trip directly from their country of origin. Under another, it requires a head tax, payable on entry. The amount is many times the average annual wage of a Sikh at home. A government launch stops a boat trying to deliver the necessary money to the ship, just as later, government ships prevent food and water from reaching the Komagata Maru.

Apparently because she feels she cannot trust her audience to know the background or essential details of the incident, Pollock creates a narrating character, T.C., a "Master of Ceremonies" and, at times, a government spokesman, who fills in details and explains policy and the reasoning behind it. This character (who coincidentally parallels a character developed at about the same time on the opposite coast, the Ringmaster of Cook's On the Rim of the Curve) also helps Pollock create the "racist side-show" effect she hoped would reflect the atmosphere in Vancouver at the time, when, as newspaper reports indicated, the whole episode became a summer's entertainment, a dock-side circus complete with "the marching bands and popcorn, the apples and balloons" (Wallace and Zimmerman 119).

The Sikhs themselves appear onstage in the person of "The Woman," who speaks to her child of their hopes on arrival, expresses their fear and bewilderment as these hopes are dashed, and embodies their physical suffering as food and water run out. She sits in a cage-like platform adjacent to the brothel that is the base of operations for Hopkinson, the Head of Intelligence for the Immigration Department, and the man most responsible for enforcing the regulations. Her proximity to the brothel mirrors the ship's proximity to Vancouver and Canada, just as the brothel itself serves as a metaphor for the immoral policy that keeps "The Woman" and Vancouver separate.

Hopkinson himself helps keep the brothel in operation, protecting its interests just as he protects the interests of the Canadian government and the Canadian people. Here is a major difference from Walsh, where the interests and preferences of the Canadian public scarcely get a mention. In The Komagata Maru Incident, political policy clearly reflects public opinion. Throughout, Pollock reminds her audience directly, through T.C., and indirectly, though dialogue between characters, of white racist policies and some of the smug theories of racial superiority. She broaches the issue of political opportunism and shifting perspectives. Georg, a German informer who does much of Hopkinson's dirty work, speaks with a fellow white of the theory that northern climates gave northern peoples an evolutionary advantage. Ironically, by the play's end, Canada is at war with Germany, Georg is an enemy alien, and the Sikhs are once again allies. Georg is essentially a disposable tool to Hopkinson, as are his Sikh informers, many of whom are vengefully killed after the ship returns home. Equally disposable, to his employers, is Hopkinson himself. Historically (though not clearly so in this play), he had his own cover exposed by the Canadian government, and was himself eventually assassinated by a Sikh in consequence.

As agent for all this racist intervention, Hopkinson seems to enjoy his work. He never develops sympathy or friendship for the people he persecutes, is never admirable as a human being. The Pollock figure he is most like is the abusive, bigoted General Terry of *Walsh*. Hopkinson may even serve as a model for Terry, who is a later addition to *Walsh*, created after the original, more documentary version of that play, and after Pollock had written *The Komagata Maru Incident*. Hopkinson's motivation is rarely an issue, until the end, when, in an emotionally overcharged scene, written in intrusively "high theatrical" language, Pollock has him treat his impending assassination almost as a release or expiation.

Hopkinson, historically, was the child of a mixed marriage, but had come to hate his mother's people because his father was himself assassinated by an anti-British revolutionary. He throws his arms open and commands his assassin "Now" (47). In the moment of his death, Hopkinson begins to embrace a Hindu-sounding religious perspective on life and death, as if finally doing homage to his mother and that "darker" aspect of his nature. It is a most confusing and artificially precious scene in a strained conclusion. Moreover, as a lesson in the price of racism and violence, the assassination hits the wrong target: Hopkinson may be corrupt and a racist, but he is also only the local agent for a distant government, and shooting him is only a case of "shooting the messenger," and ignoring the sender--the government and the people and interests it supposedly represents.

Pollock has said that she wanted to address the way "oppression makes the oppressed strong" (Wyman), but she also seems to want to suggest, as did Passe Muraille in Doukhobors, that violence and injustice beget violence and injustice. She even goes further than Passe Muraille in apparently trying to persuade her audience that violence justifies a violent response. Although she does establish that these Asians come from military families, she ignores centuries of racial and sectarian violence in India, and presents the Sikhs as peaceful, non-violent "pre-Gandhis," as well as the victims of Canadian racism that they undeniably were. When Mewa Singh says as he is hanged "I am a gentle person, but gentle people must act when injustice engulfs them" (47), Pollock seems to want her audience to sympathize with him. After all, she has just spent over ninety per cent of her play exposing the causes that produce this effect. It is not only an ugly morality to espouse, it is a position that contradicts the case she makes in Walsh, in which Sitting Bull also encounters extreme provocation, in terms of the effects of Canadian policy not only on himself but his family and his people, yet resolutely obeys the law and refuses to resort to violence, and thereby denies the Canadian government legal grounds to send the Sioux back to the United States. Indeed, his treatment at the hands of the Canadian government appears the more reprehensible because of his continued non-violence.

Walsh, while first staged before The Komagata Maru Incident, has undergone considerable revision and rewriting, and its current, more familiar published shape appeared later. In the original, Theatre Calgary, version of Walsh, Pollock sought to fill in background and to cement the historical authenticity of her dramatic recreation of events by introducing each scene with recorded readings from historical documents relating to the incident. Apparently, with Walsh, as with The Komagata Maru Incident, she felt she could not trust a Canadian audience to know the historical background to the events on stage, and therefore had to find a way to fill in details. However, she found the documentary element too intrusive. Consequently, while in subsequent revisions the episodic structure of the original remains, the historical exposition, narration and interpretation are delivered mainly by a character known as Harry, an expatriate American wagonmaster. His dry, sarcastic accounts of Custer's actions against the Sioux and other tribes are much more in the late twentieth century tradition than the late nineteenth century, particularly in his accounts of the treachery practised against the "savages" by the American Army in general and Custer in particular. Harry also delivers the final sarcastic indictment of Canadian policy in dealing with the Sioux, starving them out gradually rather than attacking them directly: "Sir John A.'s policy for dealing with the Sioux was an all around winner . . . beats Custer all to hell!" (167).

Chronologically, the events portrayed in Walsh occur only two to five years after the events portrayed by Hardin, and might seem more appropriate to the section above on the aboriginal/white clashes. However, this is not a "first contact" play. Rather, Pollock examines an incident involving political refugees seeking asylum from persecution by a hostile government, and the Canadian government's cowardly response to the political pressure of that vengeful foreign government, the United States, for the return of "their" Indians. Her Sioux are still rather "stagy" Indians: Sitting Bull, for example, is a natural nobleman, a man of undeniable stature who orates magnificently, and who teaches his son, Crowfoot, the mysteries of the medicine circle. Sitting Bull and his family are the main onstage representatives of several thousand Sioux whose presence offstage is registered by sound effects, particularly the sounds of many horses. Sitting Bull's nobility and strength of character earn the admiration of Walsh and several other characters in the North West, even as he remains a source of fear to settlers and of international tension involving Canada, England and the United States. However, Sitting Bull and his qualities are not the central issue here, and his fate and that of his people is mainly the opportunity for Pollock to explore the role and fate of the local agents of national and international politics.

The main dramatic action centres on the falling off from dignity and self-respect of the title character. Pollock presents Walsh as a man caught between two loyalties: his duty to uphold the law, and his duty to care for and protect a friend--in this case Sitting Bull. This sort of tension between conflicting duties could have been here, as it could also have been in Davin: The Politician, the stuff of a tragedy of classic proportions. However, Pollock somewhat undermines the tragic potential in her treatment of events and issues. While she does show a man caught between divided loyalties, and struggling with his sense of duty, she guides the audience strongly to favour the side of friendship, and, as with The Komagata Maru Incident, to criticise the kind of law that sometimes gets made in the "national" interest, and the kind of people who uphold it. That is, there is a clearly preferable choice, and both the audience and, at critical moments, Walsh, realize it. As Walsh asks himself when he has to sentence a starving Sioux for slaughtering a settler's cow in order to feed his family, ". . . that is the law, but where is the justice?" (164). Serving the "Honourable men" of Ottawa and their laws and policies is obviously not the preferred "just" alternative, and any decision to serve them reveals wrong-headedness.

Pollock apparently expects her audience to know what

Walsh "should have done," but she inserts several scenes that underscore the immorality and hypocrisy of the lawmakers. For example, she establishes a historical basis for the Sioux claim for asylum and care. In Sitting Bull's first speech, showing Walsh a George III medal, he says:

> My grandfather was a soldier for the grandfather of Queen Victoria. At that time, your people told him that the Sioux nation belonged to that grandfather of the Queen. My people fought against the Longknives for your people then. We were told that you would always look after your red children. Now the Longknives have stolen our land. We have no place to go. We come home to you asking for that protection you promised. (149)

Eventually Walsh has to deliver the "that was then, this is now" answer of "his chief" in Ottawa: "This happened a long time ago. The Great White Mother has made peace with the Americans" (151). Walsh dramatizes an earlier stage of the era of "Canadian Imperialism" than does The Komagata Maru Incident, a period when sympathy apparently still leaned towards obedience to the mother country, and foreign policy still was decided in London. Walsh, therefore, lacks the specific indictment of Canadian public opinion found later in The Komagata Maru Incident, but Canada does itself no more proudly by obeying Imperial policy than it does in The

Komagata Maru Incident by defying it. Essentially, in Walsh, Britain dishonours itself by reneging on a promise to the Sioux, and Canada joins in the dishonour. The implication of this decision is that for governments, history holds no weight in the considerations of the present, but the bad taste that such a decision leaves in Walsh's and the audience's mouths invites the response that, in a country with honour, history and promises made should mean something.

Another measure of inappropriate action is General Terry, a cigar-chomping caricature bigot who first appeared in the 1983 National Arts Centre production, and through whom Pollock exposes American public and political attitudes towards the Sioux and other aboriginal people. Assuming that he is speaking to a like-minded servant of "progress," Terry confides to Walsh that the "imperative . . . is the elimination of the savage" (155). Terry, who also notes that "governments decree and we, poor bastards that we are, must deliver . . ." (155), has already made the choice for duty that Walsh does not yet know he himself will have to make, although for Terry there was apparently no agonizing. After this scene, Walsh, and Pollock's audience, can be under no misapprehensions about what will happen to the Sioux should they be forced back into the U.S., regardless of any promises made for peaceful resettlement and care on reserves.

Against this historical and moral background, Pollock provides two perspectives on Walsh's fate. The one is relative, showing Walsh at both extremes of his public life as a servant of the Canadian government. He is at the one extreme the noble, caring and sensitive police officer trying correctly and honourably to fulfil his duties in caring for the indigenous people and the first wave of settlers on the Canadian plains. At the other extreme he is the corrupt, amoral "grafter," the Commissioner of the Yukon skimming his ten percent off the top of any miner's find. Pollock chooses to show the corrupted Walsh first, in a Prologue. This "epilogue, at the beginning" (Whittaker, "Canadian West at Stratford"), added for the play's second production, at Stratford in 1974, has, with some revision, remained a fixture ever since. It removes any element of suspense about how Walsh turned out, but raises the question of why he became this way. Like many Canadians of her generation, Pollock had heard of Walsh as a distinguished early member of the Mounted Police, one of the "heroes" who established the force's reputation for bravery, so she was intrigued to discover in about 1971 that he had "later had a rather dishonourable record involving bribery during the Klondike gold rush" (Hogg, "Preserving historical dignity. . ."), and chose to write a play to explore the reasons for the change.

For most of the play, we see Walsh struggle with his duties to enforce a law that he knows is wrong and cruel. He tries to behave, and speaks of his sense of himself as, a "man of principle" (162), but learns to his horror that the principles he has served, "Honour, truth, the lot. . . . They're just words, Harry. They don't exist" (162). The issue becomes not what he knows to be the truth, but how he acts upon it. Sadly, he initially chooses another principle: "They say one's strongest instinct is self-preservation," he says to his superior, MacLeod, who forces the choice upon him, "and I've made the force my life" (162). The audience already knows from the evidence, if not from its own sense of morality, that this is "wrong," and knows from the Prologue where such cynicism leads.

In young Clarence Underhill, a new recruit learning his way in the force and the west, Pollock presents the audience with a model within, a mirror (possibly) of its own historical and political naivete on the event and its issues. Clarence's own original position is to trust and admire his superior officer, and to believe in the rightness of the law and the police who enforce it. In the circumstances, by the end of the play Walsh's first words to the recruit have taken on layers of meaning. Walsh tells Clarence, "Keep your eyes, ears and mind open . . . and your mouth shut" (145). The whole of the speech is advice intended to help the uninformed neophyte learn. The second part is intended to help him keep out of trouble. It can, however, also be read as a warning to Clarence to remain silent on what he sees, in a play that in part seeks to challenge assumed preconceptions about a Canadian cultural icon, the Mounted Police, and its role in Canadian affairs. There is behind the first part of this speech, moreover, a parallel address to her audience by the playwright. Pollock seeks to address the assumed ignorance of that audience about some of the more unsavoury events in Canadian history, and requests tolerance until she has made her whole case. Pollock herself has charged that there is a tendency in Canadian textbooks to cover up, to preserve the dignity of the dramatic personalities and events in Canadian history, which only serves to make them dull (Hogg, "Preserving historical dignity. . . "). Pollock here seems to want to make Walsh and the Mounted Police something more than "interesting," however. Silence may preserve lives and dignity, but it can also cover up disgraceful behaviour.

Accompanying the decline in the fortunes and integrity of Walsh is a decline in the trust and obedience Clarence demonstrates towards his superiors and the police force. In the final scene, an angry, bewildered Clarence delivers to Walsh the news that Sitting Bull and his son, Crowfoot, have been killed by American soldiers. Pollock here compresses events by some twelve years here, making the deaths appear to come immediately after the forced return. Her position is that these deaths were inevitable once the Sioux were forced back, a point emphasized by this compression.

Where Walsh's obedience lowers him in the audience's opinion, Clarence's attitudes and acts of disobedience, such as sneaking food to the Sioux, are calculated to raise him as a standard against which to judge what Walsh "should" have done. At the time he chooses his career over his friendship, and already disgusted with himself for his act of betrayal against Sitting Bull, Walsh says of Clarence (who, not knowing the choice Walsh has already made, still clings desperately to his confidence that the Major will try to do something for them and for his friend, Sitting Bull): "That young man should never make the force his life" (166). The line at that time is a judgement both against Walsh, who has just made the opposite choice, and against the Mounted Police itself.

Walsh's obedience apparently also undermines his own integrity, and brings out the strain of cynicism signalled somewhat prematurely in the Prologue. That cycicism is even more marked on his return to the West, when he organizes a what is in effect a "Wild West Show" to frighten and impress the Easterners who will be aboard the first train into Calgary (168). Where once he would not have had to ask, he now demands of McCutcheon "Do we have twenty men we can rely on? Top notch fellows?" In what seems a parody of Macdonald's character and political instincts, he insists that the whole "operation" is "calculated" for best effect.

His concern here is not, however, for the reputation of the force (as it was before), but for its "image." As this "important conference" proceeds, Clarence bursts in with the news of Sitting Bull and Crowfoot's death. This news finally causes Walsh to follow his own advice for Clarence, and to remove his uniform and to resign from the force. It is by now too late: he has already compromised himself irredeemably. There is an implicit "New Leftish" subtheme in these lines and actions. Although she never actually refers to it, Pollock suggests that the Mounted Police, with their motto "Maintain the Right," have, behind the wall of silence, been on occasion an agency "serving the political right."

Walsh's gesture is not tragic but pathetic. What in another treatment might seem at first an act of contrition becomes, on the face of the evidence in the Prologue, an act of surrender. Obviously, though he leaves the police force, Walsh does not desert public service, but merely moves on to a position with greater potential for personal gain. While he had a chance to emerge as a potential hero in the low mimetic mode, if only by resigning his commission rather than deserting his principles, Walsh, at least as dramatized by Pollock, turns himself instead into into a cynical villain, someone who joins forces with the "wrong" side for the "wrong" reasons. His spiritual and moral "death" is yet another possible fate for those who serve a wrong-headed policy, another object lesson to her audience in the price of obedience at a time when protest and deliberate rejection of policy are more appropriate and more admirable in both the public and private spheres.

All the plays discussed above have this in common; they seek to focus their audiences' attention on two related issues: what happened, and what should have happened. Where the "first contacts" plays are cautionary tales with ramifications seemingly more in the public realm, dealing with questions of cultural autonomy, sovereignty and physical security, the immigrant/refugee plays focus more in the private realm, as cautionary tales of personal integrity. In the "first contacts" plays, at least in The Great Wave of Civilization and On the Rim of the Curve, the intent seems to be to show that, historically, there can be no "winners" as long as forces of commerce prevail as "public morality." In the immigrant/refugee plays, consistently, the only "winners" and, therefore, the only potential "heroes" are those who reject any Canadian government policy that succeeds in its aims, though such "winners" must be found in the audience, since none appear within the cast of characters, at least on the side of "established" Canadians.

Plays such as The Komagata Maru Incident and Doukhobors are not simply plays "about" racial tension or racist laws and regulations; like the "first contacts" plays with their attack on the morality of commerce, they are plays protesting the attitudes behind the abusiveness. Protest theatre, whether called this or "political" or "social" theatre, has a broad range of aims:

> to stimulate political awareness, question established values, expose injustice, champion reform, fuel arguments on ways and means and sometimes to incite direct support for bloody revolution. (Smith 72)

To achieve, or at least attempt these aims, protest theatre can take any of an almost equally broad range of forms: "satire, homily, cartoon, revue or straight-play-with-a-message" (72). Given Smith's definition, particularly the first five aims, protest has been at least an element, if not the overall motive, in most of the plays discussed to this point, whether regional, feminist or racial. Protest makes its appearance either in open or in thinly-cloaked appeals for nationalism or cultural sovereignty, in scenes depicting violence or subversive schemes against various underdog "Davids," and in demonstrations that there are other, better, ways of solving problems, living co-operatively, or delivering services. Sometimes, as in The Komagata Maru Incident and Doukhobors, the play may overshoot its own mark and go beyond protesting an injustice and attempting to explain the cause and effect relationship between abusive, unjust laws and violent reaction. In such a case, the play can end up trying to justify or even solicit sympathy for murder and terrorism. On the whole, however, "protest plays" based on Canadian history seem to want to undermine any smugness about the "Peaceable Kingdom" of compromise, and to draw attention to an ongoing history of violence, repression and conspiracy on the part of the "haves" against the "have nots," a purpose that is even more evident in plays of class conflict, the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX:

Class Conflict in Canada

Canadian labour history, "The most exciting and ideologically turbulent department of social history" (Berger 303), has provided the subject matter for many historical plays, as well the setting for period pieces, plays that set their action against the background of a historical event.[22] Of major labour disruptions, or examples of class conflict (or, in one important example discussed below, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt (1973, revised 1974), by Theatre Passe Muraille and Rick Salutin, historical conflicts that can be treated as class conflicts), only the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 has not become the focus of a major serious dramatic or documentary treatment. Two plays, Anne Henry's Lulu Street (1967) and Jack Gray's Striker Schneiderman (1970) have been set against the background of the Winnipeg strike, though Lulu Street is more a domestic tragedy than a study in labour or class relations, while Striker Schneiderman, with the poor, proverb spouting, joke-telling Jewish philosopher-tailor with three daughters who is its title character, seems at times an attempt to write a Canadian Fiddler on the Roof. Although some reviewers found it entertaining, or even "a darn good play" (McPherson), as history it falls far short. Rather than explore the causes and effects of events, it turns them into opportunities to swap funny stories, and suggesting that in times of trouble, a quick wit and a wide circle of friends in high places on both sides in a conflict is a necessity for survival. Nathan Cohen offered the most biting indictment of this view of the strike, noting "Although you'd never guess it from this play, the general strike of 1919 was a major political event with significant long-range implications for the whole of Canada," and, further, that the play fails to expose "the true historical meaning of the strike, or [show] how it reduced a city to brute basics" ("The second start"). Cohen offered the (apparently correct) opinion that the play's first production, at the St. Lawrence Centre, would also be its last.

While this event remains a conspicuous gap in the dramatic coverage of Canada's class history, perhaps because it is too sweeping an event to contain successfully within a few hours on stage, theatres and playwrights have found enough other material from across the country to develop through a variety of methods. The main common thread of these plays is that they seek to develop sympathy for the labour or "common man" side of the conflict as the side of virtue, and to lead the audience to censure the "establishment' side, whether that be factory or mine owners, or the government of the day. Some of this is evident even in Striker Schneiderman, of which Neil Carson wrote "The repressive government officials, brutal police, prejudiced magistrates, and martyred protest marchers . . . belong, I suspect, more to the mythology of the New Left than to the Winnipeg of 1919" ("St. Lawrence Centre"). Carson's catalogue covers virtually the whole range of "villains" to be found in the four plays discussed in this chapter: 1837, John Thomas McDonough's Charbonneau and Le Chef (1968), Carol Bolt's Buffalo Jump, and Rex Deverell and Geoffrey Ursell's Black Powder: Estevan 1931. All of these are not just history plays but are also protest plays, and, moreover, and as importantly, particularly Canadian variations on such traditional historical dramatic forms as the conspiracy and martyr play. All these traditional forms can readily be formulated, as they are here, into are clashes between good and evil, with the side of labour or the "common man" cast as good, and management or privileged classes cast as evil. Such a configuration (as discussion of agitprop, below, makes clear), is common to leftist plays in general, wherever and whenever found, plays that depict and seek to take part in class struggle.

Of the four plays, Charbonneau and Le Chef and Black Powder deal with more localized or "regional" events: the 1949 strike in Asbestos, Quebec, and the 1931 strike among coal miners in south-east Saskatchewan respectively. The two Passe Muraille plays, at least as published, deal with "national" class issues: the 1837 anti-Family Compact rebellion in Upper Canada and the 1935 "On To Ottawa Trek" respectively, although both began as more specifically local or regional in focus and appeal. Buffalo Jump developed from a 1972 documentary review called Next Year Country, by Bolt and a collective from Regina's Globe Theatre. This piece dealt more specifically with events in Saskatchewan during the Great Depression of the 1930s, whereas the Passe Muraille treatment covers more of the country and a broader range of experience. 1837: The Farmers' Revolt began as merely 1837, and looked at the rebellion as a Toronto event, letting Passe Muraille's "home" audience see their city as a place where history had happened. Where the earlier play had concentrated on Toronto locations and had shown the four days of battle in that city, the later version, developed (again collectively with Salutin) to tour rural Ontario, expanded the range of locales and participants, and subdued some of the left-of-liberal politics and rhetoric (Salutin, "Preface" to 1837 200-01). However, only Black Powder and 1837: The Farmers' Revolt make regional and national considerations respectively matters of concern roughly equivalent to the matter of class conflict, the major focus of interest.

Although the four plays have essentially the same rhetorical objective, to promote sympathy for the working or common man in conflict with the more powerful owning and ruling class, they exhibit a wide range of styles and approaches in reaching that end. Most "conservative" in form is Charbonneau and Le Chef, essentially a "straight-play-with-a-message," based on the 1949 strike in Asbestos, Quebec. It is naturalistic in sets and costumes, assigns one role to each actor, and dramatizes events as a power struggle or conflict between two strong individuals. The two Passe Muraille plays use that company's characteristic presentational documentary style. Black Powder: Estevan 1931, based on labour problems in southern Saskatchewan coal fields in the early 1930s and the resultant Estevan Riot, is, like other documentaries involving Deverell and Regina's Globe Theatre, largely in the Cheeseman tradition of documentary, authenticated in the records and words of the event.

At the same time, despite such fundamental formal differences, all use a range of similar techniques in setting apart the sides, most obviously techniques taken from agitprop, which is a crude form of melodrama (Smith 75). Agitprop was working class theatre developed first in the Soviet Union as a "weapon in the class struggle" (Endres xv). Its appearance in a Canadian context in part links the Canadian examples with the more "universal" class struggle that is at the centre of a Marxist understanding of the world and of history, and with the mechanisms of that struggle. The Canadian plays, in content and style, are part of the "same old story," in effect.

To achieve its ends, agitprop "quite simply and boldly, eliminated the individual: characters in these plays are abstract representatives of a given class" (Endres xviii). There are, traditionally in agitprop, only two classes--the rich ruling class and the poor working class. As Endres defines the conflicting sides, and their physical presentation on stage,

> bad guys (capitalists, fascists and imperialists) wear silk hats and carry dollar signs. They are usually drunken degenerates. Good guys (workers) are organized, disciplined and morally pure. (xviii)

Agitprop, which is the primary theatrical mode of Buffalo Jump and Black Powder, gives working class audiences in particular a theatrical reference on the conditions in which they find themselves. It allows them to visualize themselves as being like the characters they see beset upon on the stage: innocent victims of unrepentant callous capitalist villains. Commonly, as examples such as Trevor Maguire's Unemployment (1928) or Frank Love's Looking Forward (1932) suggest, in agitprop workers appear as more or less "realistic" characters, or at least as "naturalistic" sufferers living in an unpleasant, limiting environment. Unemployment takes place in the "kitchen of a poverty-stricken working-class home" (5). The husband enters wearing "heavy shoes, faded blue overalls belted at the top, a cloth coat which is unbottoned and reveals a cheap cotton shirt" (6). Similarly, Looking Forward opens with a mother and daughter "disheartedly setting the table as they have set it a hundred times before" in a "clean but bare looking" kitchen (15). When the husband enters and wearily sits down, he reveals that the sole of his shoe is worn through. Against such "regular" people, employers, politicians, and their servants, the police, appear as stereotypical melodramatic villains, often with costumes and props to emphasize their role and to make them easily identifiable targets of satirical criticism. Though neither is an example of agitprop, in the two other plays discussed in this chapter, Charbonneau and Le Chef and 1837, the classes are similarly split through behaviour and costuming, signalling that they share the pro-labour (or pro-common man) positions of the two documentary agitprops.

Throughout Charbonneau and Le Chef, McDonough makes special reference to costume, both in his stage directions and in the dialogue among characters. This costuming is most important in separating the workers from the Director and Le Chef (the use of titles or positions as opposed to names indicates the allegorical nature of the play and of their roles, and distances them from sympathy). Where the jailed strike leader, Rene La Roche (named, like other workers and their main ally, Charbonneau, to make them more "approachable" and human), appears "dressed in the rough winter clothes of the Canadian miner" (11), the Director appears "so expensively dressed, in the latest New York styles, that he seems entirely out of place in this little mining town" (17). Of course, the Havana cigar puffing Director _is_ out of place, as an absentee landlord and foreign capitalist. He is, like the blustering cigar-chomping General Terry in _Walsh_, one of a long line of such "representative" Americans on the Canadian stage--the line goes back at least as far as _Tecumseh_ and _Laura Secord_, with their coarse-mannered invaders.

Through his costume, if not his behaviour, Le Chef comes somewhere in between the Director and the strikers. Though also "impeccably dressed" (18), he wears a battered old fedora, contrasting the Director's "elegant black Homburg" (17). Le Chef reveals his political acumen, his personal cynicism, and something of the symbolism of costume in the play, when he explains the hat:

> Now, generally people are inclined to consider a person as distant and aloof if he is too well dressed. But from an electoral point of view it is wise to wear an old hat. . . . Why, an old hat like mine identifies me with the people, with my voters. (18-19)

If his hat identifies him with the voters, his other garments clearly identify him with the Director and similar interests.

However, given its more realistic detailing, the costuming of _Charbonneau and Le Chef_ seems to owe more to the nineteenth-century melodramatic tradition than to the later agitprop theatre. Melodrama also uses costuming and make-up to signal the moral significance and worth of its characters, creating a stylistic and rhetorical link between protest theatre and the melodramatic form at the "protest play" level. This link between melodrama and the political theatre is significant because melodrama, with its focus on a moral conflict between good and bad, rather than tragedy (the aesthetic and rhetorical significance McDonough claims in his introduction), with its focus on competing and essentially equal visions of good or necessity, is the operative genre of this play.

This use of costume to caricature and satirize the ruling classes--the capitalists and the politicians--is a also a prominent feature of _1837_, as of the two other documentary agitprops. In _1837_, members of the urban Family Compact are separated by their stately bearing and rich clothes from the rural settlers:

> Peter Robinson, Commissioner of Crown Lands. _Jamey looks around_. No. That's you. Straight and tall. Fine satin shirt. Stiff collar. _Jamey begins to assume the role._ Velvet trousers. And boots that you can see your face in. (212)

The costume as described is in clear contrast to the coarser, plainer working clothes of Jamey, the settler who plays the part of Robinson in this reconstruction. The urban-rural, pastoral split in 1837 is an obvious reversal of sentiment from the prophetic scenes of the nineteenth century, where proud cities and large buildings were the hallmark of the "finished" Canada of the "future."[23]

In Black Powder, although all the actors come on stage dressed in work clothes, when one has to assume the role of "Happy" Wilson, the temperamental, abusive mine manager, he dons a "great buffalo robe coat [and] smokes a cigar" (10). The Manager's sudden shifts of mood, firing, rehiring, then threatening to refire workers in sudden shifts of mood and temper, are humorous, but also a commentary on managerial arbitrariness, a characteristic that needs to be driven out as "harmful. Finally, in Buffalo Jump, the separating of the classes is achieved partly through costume, though in this case the differences are enhanced through language, most evidently in the case of Bennett, as described by Carol Bolt:

> Obviously Bennett never said any of my lines. But some of the images like the ship of state and things like that were typical of the time and typical of him. Unfortunately, he wasn't profound or interesting; he wasn't an interesting speaker at all. So we extended those images to make him a cartoon of himself, really. That's the way the speeches were created. The structure of the

> play developed to keep him as a larger-than-life figure while the guys were going toward Ottawa to find him. He just stayed there and talked about betrayal and things. (Wallace and Zimmerman 267)

The strikers, however, are definitely costumed (or are described as costumed) in agitprop style, stigmatized by uniform of "relief camp sweaters"(407).

There is one additional feature of agitprop or agitprop-like plays, and certainly of the four plays discussed here: the workers are the only characters to be given a private life, while the wealthy exist only in their public functions, as capitalists or as governors. For example, in all four of the class plays, only the workers or the "common people" have or seek ideal domestic lives. The intent is to humanize the poor working class and to dehumanize the wealthy, who create or exacerbate the conditions that strain working class families. One sequence of scenes in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt involves the meeting, marriage, and eventual love-match of a settler couple. When the husband leaves to fight for political independence, he also leaves to fight for his land and family against the machinations of a distant colonial government that has been cheating and foreclosing on other settlers. Rene LaRoche, the strike leader in Charbonneau and Le Chef, fears for the safety of his pregnant wife, who is indeed later beaten by anti-strike police forces. At the start of Buffalo Jump, parents struggle to keep the family farms going and to keep their sons on the farm. Finally, many scenes in Black Powder: Estevan 1931 take place in the shack of Julian Gryshko, as he and his wife try to deal with the harshness of their economic dependency on the company stores and the inadequacy of wages. Their good spirits fly in the face of their hardships, though the cloying sentimentality of moments in which they realize there is "nothing else to be done about life except to embrace and laugh" (16) taxes the credulity of all but the most ideologically committed. When the rich and powerful have a "family" life, it is a perversion of the domestic ideal, as in the case of the "Family Compact" of 1837: The Farmers' Revolt. The suffering of the family unit and the disruption to private lives that result from harsh living and working conditions depicted in these plays helps pull sympathy towards the "ordinary" people, whose problems, supposedly, are more familiar to the audience.

In addition to agitprop techniques and rhetorical ploys, all four also share a rather predictable "David and Goliath" mythical pattern in which the weak, poor working class stands up against the strong, powerful ruling class, usually shown as a collusion between wealth and government. It is a pattern common enough in international drama based on class conflict, as well as common in Canadian historical playwriting, as earlier examples above have suggested. However, in all four of these examples, "David" loses at the end of the play, though not necessarily at the "end" of history, another common Marxist or Leftist configuration. "David" is usually the victim of an anti-labour or anti-common man plot on the part of the rich. In that they all "expose" an ongoing "plot" to keep the poorer or less privileged classes "down," and to manipulate laws and to use law enforcement agencies in favour of wealth and power, these plays are not only "protest" plays but also "conspiracy" plays. Herbert Lindenberger explains that because conspiracy "creates the means by which one group clashes, or resolves its differences, with another group," and is "that aspect of the historical process that most readily lends itself to dramatic treatment" (30), it "finds its way into most dramatic plots" (53). Moreover, "conspiracy" provides the "central fable shaping the vast majority of historical drama" (30). Lindenberger's use of the word "fable" is highly significant in this context, as it draws attention to the essential mythopoeic function of such plays, and suggests the presence of a moral principle behind any emergent myth.

The basic premise of the conspiracy play, Lindenberger maintains, is the "plot to overthrow the regime" (30). Clearly, "conspiracy" has, by this definition, been part of the shape of plays such as _Medicare!_, _Paper Wheat_, and even

What Glorious Times They Had, with their tales of successful attempts to overcome the professional power of the medical associations to set the terms of medical service, the monopolistic power of the grain companies and Grain Exchange, or even the exclusive power of men to vote.

As described by Lindenberger, a conspiracy play typically follows a succession of stages:

> first: the audience, but not the intended victim, knows of the conspiracy; second, the victim learns of the plot and initiates a counterplot, of which the audience, but not the original conspirators, becomes aware; third, the contending parties come to share each other's knowledge as they clash and bring the conflict to some sort of resolution. (32)

This is the plot, to look at non-Canadian example of a pro-labour history play, of The Man Who Never Died: A Play About Joe Hill, by American Barrie Stavis. Hill, a strong organizer and voice for labour, is framed for murder by the copper company bosses, and the process of his trial, appeals and execution is a drawn-out and complex conspiracy, as Hill and his supporters come to understand.

In contemporary Canadian historical plays, as exemplified clearly by Paper Wheat, a different, though clearly related, pattern, is more common: the "counter-conspiracy" pattern. This exposes the conspiracy of power to entrap or limit the poor or weak before it dramatizes the attempts to overcome this conspiracy. Such a "plot," though not the equivalent counterconspiracy, is evident even in Striker Schneiderman, as the magistrate, Hutchison, explains a plan to provoke violence among the strikers, then, "once there is violence it will be plain to any reasonable person that the strike must end" (16). Eventually, the strikers do fall into Hutchison's trap, and the strike does end, violently, with two people dead and many injured. By making labour or common people the "injured party" of an "establishment" conspiracy to maintain "the system," the "counterconspiracy" play justifies, or attempts to justify, the sometimes problematic rebellious and "illegal" acts of the powerless--an issue already discussed in relation to Doukhobors and The Komagata Maru Incident. In Paper Wheat, of course, the audience finds out about the Grain Exchange conspiracy at the same time as Ed Partridge, which tends to put us on his side out of a shared sense of outrage, and make the attempts to organize seem a logical, necessary and responsible response to provocation. This is another common Canadian variation on the general pattern outlined by Lindenberger, a variation seen for example, in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt.

All four of the class conflict plays named above follow the "counterconspiracy" pattern. Early in Charbonneau and Le Chef, Le Chef, sounding like Hutchison, in Striker

Schneiderman, explains to the director of the mining company how he plans to put down the strike in Asbestos. It is a system he has used before, in the 1937 textile strike: first declare the strike illegal; second, send in Provincial Police to arrest the leaders and "goddam radicals" (20); finally, "wait for the strikers to starve. When they're hungry, I negotiate. When they've had enough, I dictate the terms" (20). Later actions by Archbishop Charbonneau to prevent this plan from succeeding constitute the pro-labour counterconspiracy. In 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, the Family Compact, with its land-grabbing, self-serving grasp on government, and the organized Tory violence at the polling stations constitute the conspiracy, while early Reform politics and later armed rebellion constitute the "counterconspiracy." In Buffalo Jump, the labour camps through which the Canadian government attempts to keep the unemployed isolated and to crush them into silence through military policing and discipline, provide the "conspiracy." Organizing the March to demand better working conditions and fairer treatment is the "counterconspiracy." Finally, in Black Powder: Estevan 1931, company towns and company stores, arbitrary wage reductions, and anti-union collusion by organized mine owners constitute the conspiracy to keep the workers forever dependent, while the unionizing and eventual strike come as the counterconspiracy.

While Canadian theatre appears to favour the counterconspiracy pattern, the plays conform to the two central concerns of the conspiracy play, as defined by Lindenberger:

> Most of the great historical dramas are centrally concerned with either the transfer of power from one force to another, . . . or with the means by which a force already in power manages to stabilize itself against the onslaught of contending forces. (31)

A few plays, such as Paper Wheat, (arguably) Medicare!, and the feminist What Glorious Times They Had, plays that deal with instances of "triumph," take the first form. However, all of the Canadian class conflict plays, and most other "conspiracy" plays, plays that deal with "defeat" (even if only temporary defeat), take the second form. They depict the violence that results as the "legal" authority uses the law and law enforcement agencies to try to repress the emergent counterconspiracy, and end with the power structure essentially intact, and with the representatives or friends of labour dead, imprisoned, or in exile. The effect is captured in Sir John A. Macdonald's frustrated analysis in Coulter's Riel: ""The outlaw once more shapes the law" (204). To capture fully the essence of contemporary Canadian history plays, Coulter could have had Macdonald add: "and exposes the law as unjust."

In most Canadian counterconspiracy plays of protest, the counterconspirators and their leaders end up on the wrong side of the law, frequently on the wrong side of the Canada-U.S. border. Consider Riel exiled then executed, Gabriel Dumont temporarily exiled, William Lyon Mackenzie exiled and his supporters on the gallows, Jaanus Karkulainen sent to an insane asylum, Nicholas Flood Davin defeated and brought to suicide, Ed Partridge (ironically enough) pushed aside by the very movement he prophesied and promoted. In The Fighting Days, Francis Beynon is forced into self-imposed exile. At times, it almost seems that if you want to know whose side you are supposed to be on in Canadian historical plays, come in for the last scene and see who is forced out of the country, or who is punished for attempting to change the country for the better or for trying to improve the lot of fellow Canadians. At the close of all of such plays, including the four class conflict plays under discussion, Walsh's anguished, frustrated outburst, "that is the law. But where is the justice in it?", hangs over the proceedings as a question the audience is supposed to be asking itself, and answering "Nowhere."

In these class conflict plays, as with the race-relations plays, there is frequently an attempt to engage the sympathies of the audience not only for the victims of the specific action in history, but for similar victims of the same kind of action in general. The anti-management and anti-government action stands as a characteristic and necessary Canadian response to similar present provocations, or to unfinished business handed down from the past. In this, class conflict plays generally attempt to extend the cause (in both its rhetorical "cause and effect" sense and its more allegorical sense "The Cause") for the counterconspiracy into the present, as a way of educating their audiences' political consciousness and, if possible, inciting some sort of reformist political activity.

The conspiracy or counterconspiracy play, especially matched with a "David and Goliath" mythical subtext, might achieve this activation, or suggest the direction it might go, at least to an audience already sympathetic to the political left. However, the conspiracy play, especially as practised here in Canada, goes beyond a simple political and economic confrontation over power to become a moral confrontation over the nature of Canada and Canadians in general. This transfer into the moral plane involves further sentimentally characterizing the poor or the common not just as initially powerless but also as fundamentally virtuous, and the rich not only as powerful but as fundamentally villainous. The transfer, then, also brings into play another set of conventions related to the conspiracy play: the tyrant and martyr plays, which in theme conform to the two "central concerns" of historical drama identified by Lindenberger.

The tyrant play, which "by its very nature, is about the fall or the ultimate impotence of a tyrant" (40) emerges as a conspiracy play concerned with the transfer of power. The martyr play, on the other hand, most frequently deals with the effect on the "weak" of the "powerful" retaining their hold. Older plays about Canadian resistance in the War of 1812, such as Tecumseh and Laura Secord, fall into this category. Similarly, among plays already discussed above, Paper Wheat and Medicare!, and What Glorious Times they Had are essentially "tyrant" conspiracy plays, about the successful overthrow of the "tyrannical regimes" of the grain companies and the Grain Exchange, of the doctors' associations, and the political monopoly of men, in that these "regimes" all lose the power they are shown to have previously held over people whom they had "exploited" for personal gain or private interest.

However, the preferred plot in recent Canadian historical plays, including the four class conflict plays named above, seems to be the second of Lindenberger's two cases, plays showing how the force in power manages to remain in power. The plot develops from episodes in which the more conservative, "static" force, or the "Old World" interest, manages to withstand the more liberal to radical force for change, or the "New World" interest. It is, for example, the shape of Coulter's "Riel" plays and of Pollock's The Komagata Maru Incident, which seems for most of its length mainly concerned with the mechanisms that racists use to protect the "purity" of their society. This configuration commonly produces what Lindenberger calls the "martyr play," a play in which a hero/victim (who may be either an individual or a group, such as a workers or women), resists the attempts of outside, often tyrannical, forces to compromise his or her particular integrity, and ultimately sacrifices him or herself physically in order to protect and preserve that integrity. That is, martyrs are those, like James Reaney's Donnellys (or other labour hero/martyrs worldwide-like Stavis's Joe Hill, "The Man Who Never Died"), who "win" by "losing." They may perish, but their cause and strength live on, to be taken up and finished later--preferably by an audience newly sensitized and activated by the performance. This is obviously only a variant on the tyrant play, in that the tyrant still stands exposed as ultimately vanquishable, but the work is not yet finished.

There are inherent rhetorical dangers in the martyr conspiracy play. Villainous tyranny and heroic martyrdom are in some respects relative, and may in the end be defined more by the audience perceptions and tastes than the historical or dramatic situation. Any deposed or assassinated "tyrant" who is the victim of a conspiracy is potentially the martyr/hero of a play for some audience, one that shares the ideology or interests the "tyrant" also served and fostered. Caesar's emergence in Shakespeare's

Julius Caesar as a martyr for those who join Antony in opposing Brutus and Cassius is an object lesson in the tyrant-to-martyr transfiguration. Similar to the danger of turning a tyrant into a potential martyr for a counter-cause is the danger of classifying any play, particularly a "protest" play, as a "conspiracy play." As a word and concept "conspiracy" can readily conjure negative connotations, since "conspirators, as Caesar himself observes, sometimes present an unpleasant face (especially to those against whom they conspire), a face that can actually create sympathy for the one or ones conspired against. Protest plays of class conflict, however, seek to make the audience dissatisfied with what the plays define as the status quo, and to remain dissatisfied long enough to take some sort of action to change it. That is, like political plays from the time of Erwin Piscator onward, they seek to turn their "audience" into a "crowd" (Innes 144), even, though not necessarily, a mob. (Note, however, that the emphasis here is on the word "seek." That such plays rarely seem to succeed in this organizing and activating objective is not at issue here: what matters is the intent, and its influence on shaping of events and characters.) Any residual sympathy for the villain or tyrant works against this purpose, whether the tyrant succeeds or is overthrown. The common Canadian practice of configuring the workers and common people as "counter-conspirators" against the collusion and connivance of management and government not only helps establish and focus sympathies, it helps minimize the potential for a later transfer of loyalties.

Lindenberger explains that the constant in martyr plays, from age to age, is the work of the playwright to tempt the audience to feel wronged, and to sympathize with the hero and share a sense of the wrong threatening the hero, thus making the audience willing to share vicariously in the victim's sacrifice and to enjoy the hero/victim's triumphant martyrdom (Lindenberger 49):

> What differs from age to age is the particular mode of idealism for which the martyr is sacrificed. A successful martyr play works to flatter its audience by making the latter's particular style of idealism triumph. (49)

The major effort of a martyr play, then, goes into broadening the scope of the general and particular virtues of the representatives of the operative "mode of idealism" and the magnifying the vices of the threatening or restricting agency. This process frequently extends characterizations into areas that have little or nothing to do with the specifics of class.

Charbonneau and Le Chef is not only the most "traditional" of the four (even to the extent of focusing on the life of an individual, rather than on the fate of a class), it most openly advertises its conspiracy shape: McDonough names his acts "The Conflict", "The Conspiracy", and "The Condemnation." Within the dialogue, the terms "martyr" and "tyrant" figure frequently and prominently in the debates between the two "combatants" for power: Archbishop Charbonneau of Montreal and Premier Maurice Duplessis, or "Le Chef," as he is called throughout this play. The "conspiracy" of Act Two is actually a counterconspiracy by Le Chef against Charbonneau, who has already succeeded as a "counter-conspirator" against Le Chef in Act One. Charbonneau's eventual "martyrdom" involves his removal from office and "exile" (119) to semi-retirement in Victoria, B.C.--scarcely a hardship posting in most circumstances, but a definite come-down for the brilliant, sensitive, and socially aware priest who loses the confidence and support of his superiors.

The element of banishment is not the only feature this martyr play has in common with the others. McDonough establishes that Le Chef is clearly in the wrong, morally, while Charbonneau is clearly in the right. The moral issues emerge in the prolonged debates between Charbonneau and Le Chef, and between Charbonneau and his chief advisor, "The Dominican," debates that consider the place of morality in the political arena. Le Chef brands himself as unmistakably immoral when he informs Charbonneau that the clergyman is ignorant and naive when it comes to politics, which "consists of only three things": "Firstly power; secondly power: and thirdly power" (40). Charbonneau here and in a later scene with the Dominican, explains the position of the Church and answers to the commands of his own Christian conscience "to speak out and take a stand against social injustice and political tyranny" (50).

The conspiracy/counterconspiracy plot begins with the anti-labour conspiracy. Le Chef, who believes that only foreign capital can develop the resources of the province for the "good" of everyone, is shown to be in collusion with the foreign (American) Director of the asbestos mining company, protecting "foreign" interests and capital. He does this by keeping labour laws harsh and repressive, even in the face of opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, which actually helps organize and administer the unions as part of the Church's program and policy for social justice and equality. In Act One, Scene Two, Le Chef and the Director discuss the situation in Asbestos, and Le Chef outlines his plan to undermine the strike, a plan that he has used successfully in the 1937 textile strike: declare the strike illegal; send in strike breakers, protected by the Provincial Police, who will also arrest the strike leaders; then "sit back and wait for the strikers to starve" (20). Starvation, as Pollock was later to show in Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident, is a time honoured "solution" to Canadian governors faced with unpleasant or recalcitrant populations.

In his eventual confrontation and debate with Le Chef, Charbonneau requests that the Premier "respect the social teachings of the Church concerning the rights of workers to organize into unions and to participate freely in collective bargaining" (29). Later, responding to Le Chef's unctuousness and insulting explanations that political decisions involve "concrete complexities" requiring experience beyond the grasp of the "ivory tower philosopher" (31), and sounding at times more like the professional left-wing orators of Buffalo Jump and Black Powder than a bishop, Charbonneau reminds Le Chef that the strike presents the Premier with "an ideal opportunity to be the nationalist Premier rescuing our people from the absentee owner and the foreign exploiter" (35). Charbonneau throws Le Chef's history of "success" back into his face, pointing out the injustice of the settlement of the 1937 strike, which did not meet the essential Church requirement for effective union representation and free collective bargaining. Charbonneau even observes that Le Chef in effect follows the same dictatorial behaviour and policies as Stalin. Le Chef eventually tires of the game and lets his true cynicism emerge: he tells the Archbishop that politics consists of three things: "Firstly power; secondly power; and thirdly power. Power, Monseigneur, that's politics. Power, power, power" (40). By the end of this scene, the moral and ethical high ground is Charbonneau's, the legal and political low ground is Le Chef's.

Charbonneau's response to Le Chef, his tactics and his arrogant disregard of Church social doctrine is a form of "counterconspiracy"; he calls from his pulpit for aid to the strikers, to enable them to withstand the pressure. This call results in a defeat for the Premier, and makes of him an implacable enemy. "The Conflict," then, is also an Act that establishes the pattern of conspiracy and counterconspiracy even before the Act entitled "The Conspiracy" begins.

In the two acts that follow, Le Chef plots and exacts his revenge while Charbonneau steadfastly clings to his principles and his faith that he is secure because he has only acted on the best Church principles and in line with policy. He rejects warnings and advice to go to Rome to protect himself, partly from naivete, partly from pride. In his actions and attitudes, echoes abound of such plays as Ibsen's An Enemy of the People, in which

> the villains (read "Le Chef," Premier Duplessis) are totally devoted to expedient self-interest, and Stockman (read "Charbonneau") is so dazzled by the blinding light of Truth he never stops to estimate the moral stature of the men with whom he deals. (Smith 73)

In Charbonneau's case, he is aware that he deals with a potential tyrant: he even calls Le Chef this on occasion. However, he seriously underestimates his fellow bishops, particularly the more conservative ones, and he seriously misunderstands his superiors at the Vatican and the connections between secular and canon power politics. Charbonneau's "martyrdom" is emotionally the more powerful for his sense of betrayal. Politically and rhetorically, however, it leads nowhere and solves nothing. In becoming a martyr, Charbonneau may retain an audience's respect and the moral high ground, but at great personal cost. Moreover, he loses the important struggle, the one for the power necessary to make his high standards the effective standards of his society.

Charbonneau's failure is nowhere more evident than in the final, grotesque tableau that brings together all of the "triumphant" and "loyal" forces, along with a surprising array of "sell-outs" from among the very people with whom Charbonneau sided and in whose behalf he worked. All adore and praise Le Chef as he delivers a cynically nationalistic campaign speech that is as much threat and intimidation as promise. The scene recalls scenes from the days of Adolf Hitler--and indeed, Charbonneau himself uses the term "fuhrer" in reference to Le Chef earlier in the play. As Le Chef ridicules his opposition and makes a patriotic appeal for support for Quebec's autonomy from Ottawa, he is joined first by a miner, then a priest. In these two figures we see the apparent defeat of Charbonneau's idealism, as those for whom he fought, and with whom he thought he fought, go over to the enemy. Then, as the speech turns from patriotic seduction into economic coercion, the tableau expands to include those who will truly benefit from Le Chef's programs: "A bishop walks on the stage, followed by the Minister of Labour, the Apostolic Delegate, the American director, and others. Together they cheer" (128). It is a tableau of the survivors, those who have managed to hold onto power for their own interests, and the deluded, those who have been seduced away from pursuing their shared class interests to follow the chimerical "false ideal" of nationalism. It is also a tableau designed to raise its audience's political consciousness and to identify the true "enemies" of freedom and justice in this and similar cases.

Crude and obvious though it may seem in this "protest" context, such a gathering is a common technique in protest theatre, and, as a look at the closing scenes of many of historical plays by Shakespeare and others would soon show, is a common technique among historical playwrights who want to leave their audience with a clear sense of the direction and significance of historical process and dynastic or political or social succession. It is, historically and politically, a "closed" ending. Not only do Charbonneau's standards and dreams remain unrealized, but, from anything we see in this play, they appear to remain unrealizable.

While McDonough wants his audience to know that the wrong side won, and to identify the nature of the adversary and the scope of his power base, he does not offer any vision of how Charbonneau could have won and still retained his principles and standards. His appeal is more emotional, seeking an "isn't it a shame. . ." response. Charbonneau's rejection of the advice to go to Rome to save himself, and his refusal to become a cunning user of "political ruses" and a caterer to ecclesiastical bureaucrats (103) keep him morally in the right, but how, then, does the "right" side defeat the "wrong." Can it? McDonough succeeds in identifying the wrong, but, unlike those who would come after, he offers no melioristic vision or program to redress that wrong. Instead, he seems to end with a bitter, defeated "that's the way of it."

Only a few years later, playwrights and collectives, as exemplified here by the three remaining "protest" plays of class conflict, Buffalo Jump, 1837: The Farmer's Revolt, and Black Powder: Estevan 1931, would go beyond informing their audiences about the status quo, and would try as well to activate those audiences. In the latter two cases, they conclude by holding out a vision of a better result, claiming "There is another way, and Canadians have a tradition of seeking that better way." At times, in tracing the particular martyrdom of their respective "heroes," Buffalo Jump, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, and Black Powder: Estevan 1931 all seem to be telling the same story, with only the names and locations changed. This should hardly be surprising, since labour or class struggle plays have a common pattern, and a common statement to make, worldwide: the struggle goes on because the conditions that give rise to it continue to exist.

The three Canadian examples follow the two-act development described above in, for example Paper Wheat and What Glorious Times They Had: Act I-exposition of the historical background for the conflict; Act II-conflict.[23] In Act I the three labour plays set out the scope of the problem and the terms of the conspiracies, characterizing the essential villainy of the anti-labour collusion of the ruling classes, and the essential humanity and decency of the common people who seek only their rights. In Act Two they bring the two sides into direct, bloody conflict. Buffalo Jump seems, from this, to establish a pattern that appears not only in labour or class conflict plays, but reappears (without the bloodshed) in plays such as Paper Wheat and What Glorious Times They Had, plays also involving public conflict over repressive systems or circumstances that pit social and economic interests against each other.

As part of their "activist" intent, all three of these plays use presentational techniques, such as multiple casting, spare sets, costumes that are more suggestive than imitative, and scenes linked more thematically than narratively (although the chronological depiction of events tends to give the plays overall a more traditional "beginning, middle and end" narrative shape). The more fluid theatrical style, with its emphasis on transformation of actor and prop, serves the political interests of protest theatre. The theatrical transformations demonstrate that nothing is permanent, all is changeable, even the political and social circumstances. However, the artistic transformations onstage stand in ironic counterpoint to the social and political stasis that prevails at the end of the "conflict," and, the plays suggest, in Canadian society today.

All three of these plays derive from the documentary tradition. However, while both of the Passe Muraille plays, Buffalo Jump and 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, contain scenes that are based on documents, neither is a true documentary, either in the Cheeseman sense, or in the broader sense of using the theatre to interpret the subject as revealed through the documents. Diane Bessai notes that in these two plays Passe Muraille's "creative freedom often errs too much on the side of historical laxity to be properly categorized as 'documentary' ("Documentary Theatre" 18); that is, they are reconstructions rather than re-interpretations or re-examinations. In going this step beyond, Bessai explains, the plays enter the realm of myth, helping create a "richer legendary base from which dramatic literature can draw" (18).

The documentary nature of Black Powder is both more "authentic" and more elusive. Like Medicare!, Black Powder is one of Globe's "commissioned" works, but one Deverell selected from a range of possible topics, because he shared the theatre's interest in the dramatic potential and historical significance of the event (Perkins, "Drama expounds. . ."). This linking of playwright's and theatre's interests parallels the shared interests of Bolt, Salutin and Passe Muraille. Like Medicare!, Black Powder is in the Cheeseman tradition, an attempt to "explore the texture and effect of 'the kind of rhetoric that crisis moments in history produce'" (Perkins, "Drama expounds Saskatchewan rhetoric). However, there are numerous, and not always clearly identified, fictional passages; as Deverell has explained, Black Powder

> comes off as a series of documentary material: speeches, reports, letters and recollections, with a few reconstructions spotted here and there. For example, all we have is a copy of the [city council] resolution banning the parade, and we know that one alderman voted against it. (Perkins, "Drama expounds. . .")

The scene depicting the council vote, then, becomes a "creative guess" at what might have been said. Similarly, the scenes depicting the life of Julian Gryshko, one of the strikers killed in the "Estevan riot" had to be filled in, as an embedded drama within a documentary frame.

Certainly neither Bolt nor Salutin would have much argument with Bessai on the point of myth and myth-building, since both have acknowledged their interest in the mythic potential of their material and of history in general. In 1972, Bolt explained that she was as interested in an ambient popular nostalgia about the 1930s and the Great Depression, a nostalgia that was part of the general popular historical interest described by Berger. Such nostalgia, she claimed, "is people making myth out of reality, and I like myths on the stage" (Kureda, "Canadian play's author"). Where Bolt is interested in the myths the people themselves have created this way, and with Passe Muraille adopts a theatrical style "of the people" and of the period, Salutin's interest in the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada is more akin to Reaney's interest in the Donnelly story: he wants to rewrite the story, to make a new myth of resistance out of an old myth of misguided, anti-social failure. The highly fluid staging and constantly shifting roles emphasize for Salutin as they did for Reaney that everything is mutable, even old stories, old attitudes and the status quo. This taste for mythopoeic theatre is the linking point between Bolt, Salutin and Passe Muraille, the point at which the writer's interest and the theatre's meet, and make possible the combination of playwright and creative collective on the same project.

Buffalo Jump marks the first time under Thompson that Passe Muraille attempted to work with both a collective and a writer. However, according to Bolt, by the time the show was staged only one line of her script from the review Next Year Country remained (Wallace and Zimmerman 267) in a script that both she and Thompson see as essentially the work of the collective (Johns 31; Wallace and Zimmerman 267). That the show is usually associated with, and is published under, Bolt's name may be seen as evidence for a popular and critical adherence to and preference for the "myth" of a single author or playwright over the idea of a collective creation. In any event, what emerges from the collaboration is a play that tells the story of how "the people," led by "Red Evans" (a composite hero made up in part from two actual trek leaders, "Red" Walsh and Arthur "Slim" Evans (Nett 14)), rise up in common cause against an indifferent, even antagonistic government, personified by Prime Minister R. B. Bennett, and of how that government callously shoots the people down to maintain its hold on power. This hardly sounds like the stuff of "nostalgia," but that element is captured in the play's social idealism, in the story of how the people stood together and attempted something positive in their own interest, rather than passively letting themselves be pushed to the margins of society.

The title refers to the government's tactic of "herding" together the unemployed, who eventually become the strikers. First they are herded together into isolated work camps where they can be "controlled" and kept from the public eye. This treatment is the "conspiracy', the plan to sequester and silence potential trouble makers. It is the government's totally inappropriate response to the economic conditions spelled out in the opening sequence. As the chorus sings "Looks like we should all agree / What we need for the people is the farm relief" (393), the audience sees families forced off their farms and broken up by the combined effects of the drought and depression. Echoing Passe Muraille's social/historical analysis in Doukhobors, Pollock shows how the government's actions create problems, rather than solve them. Rather than pacifying the men and keeping them subdued, the unfair treatment by the Canadian government sows the seeds of resistance, creates a common grievance, and molds the individuals into a class (community). Furthermore, by bringing this group together, the government unwittingly makes politicization for, and organization of, the "counter-conspiracy" both necessary and easier.

The title also refers to the way the strikers are later "herded" into a trap in Regina, where the police could deal with them effectively--a tactic the title associates with the hunting methods of the aboriginal people of the Great Plains, who developed the efficient practice of stampeding herds of buffalo over cliffs. The image raised by the title seems to suggest, especially when looked at in comparison to Dumont's mixed metaphor of buffalo/muskox behaviour, in The Plainsman, that the strikers' banding together served the government's interests more than the strikers' own, making them an easier target. Rhetorically, the image works against what appears to be Bolt's main interest, the promotion of organization as a way of resisting unfair conditions and the conspiracies of power. Certainly, her sympathy is clearly with the strikers, to whom she refers as "the guys," and for what becomes in effect their abortive "long march" to confront the physically, politically and linguistically distant Prime Minister.

Theatrically, the play uses an enriched array of agitprop techniques in a presentational mix that includes mime, song, simple staging and minimal use of props. Some sequences, like the mock opera of the preparations for and arrival of the Marchers in Golden go well beyond the usual agitprop song style--which is better reflected in the opening chorus regarding farm relief. On the whole, however, despite this and other excesses--overuse of the rodeo stampede motif, for another example--on the whole the staging, or story style, reinforces the sentiment for the workers by telling their story within a form originally developed for and by workers theatre.

Typically of protest theatre, and protest theatre techniques, the play tends to appeal to the already converted--something Urjo Kareda sneered at in his negative review:

> But the fact that [the show] seems so proud that its heart is in the right place politically--though given this theatre's audience, whose heart is elsewhere?-can't keep the production from being amorphous, shallow and wearying. (Conolly, ed. 102)

Herbert Whittaker, perhaps showing his heart to be with rather than opposed to Passe Muraille's general audience, and his sense of occasion more attuned to Bolt's own sense of the mythology of the March itself, reviewed the same production and found the "comic strip version of a famous Depression upheaval" (Conolly, ed. 100) "ingenious," and commented on how the play recreates the "stark reality" of the event by remembering it "as a piece of Canada's folk history."

One of the most fluid segments in performance has been the ending. Bolt and Passe Muraille tried several conclusions, to match the site of the performance. In Ottawa, for example,

> we ended by using Annie Bowler (sic), who had been around Ottawa after the trek fell apart, and had had people marching up and down the streets. They didn't really get anywhere but they were trying at least, and they were making a statement. (Wallace and Zimmerman 267-68).

The best known ending, however, the one finally published, goes away from this "we haven't lost yet" Marxist ending. Instead it directly exposes the audience to the same sort of treatment the strikers received at the hand of the police (leaving aside, obviously, the actual shootings and killings of the Regina Riot, the event that finally broke up the trek and created new martyrs and a new icon for the left in Canada). The riot breaks out around the edges of the theatre, and amid scenes of fighting, and accompanied by the sounds of shooting and breaking glass, police move in from the back. Striking their palms with batons, the "Mounties" order everyone out of the theatre. As the audience files out, "strikers" handcuffed to "policemen" "'tell their own stories of what happened after the riot" (442). Unlike 1837: The Farmers' Revolt and Black Powder, Buffalo Jump does not name those hanged for rebellion or killed during riots. The plan seems to be to make the class itself, the whole group of strikers, the collective "hero / martyr" of this episode.

Salutin, who claims that the purpose of history is to be "useful ("Great History Robbery" 58), does not use the word "myth" in connection with 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, the only one of these plays not based on a labour dispute or strike. However, his explanation of the place of the events of 1837 in Canadian history, and his analysis of Canadian history and historiography, contain passages that reveal the mythopoeic scope and intent of his work. His essential purpose in writing plays based on history is to replace the "Peaceable Kingdom" myth that had prevailed throughout much of the twentieth century, the "perniciously false" view that "all our problems were resolved 'peaceably' long ago" (27) with a new myth, based on Canada's "missing history of resistance" (58). Such a myth would challenge what Salutin has defined elsewhere as the country's "dominant ideology", its "respect for authority" (Posesorski 41). While this necessarily involves retelling and dramatizing stories of failure (since, in Salutin's view Canada has never achieved "independence"--politically or culturally), the definitive quality of such a history is not the failure but the continuity (58).

Sounding at times like James Reaney speaking of his Donnelly plays and the need for a better STORY, Salutin claims that what the country needs is a new kind of hero: "When this country is finally free, it will be because we've had better heroes" (66). The purpose behind the shaping of events and lives in 1837: The Farmers' Revolt is to supply Salutin's audience with these "better" heroes. To this end he reshapes an event usually portrayed as an atypical but quickly suppressed blot on Canada's peaceful, orderly development by writing out the urban, middle-class element from the rebellious side, and recreating the event in an almost pastoral configuration: a virtuous poor rural working class uprising against a rapacious wealthy urban ruling class. However, the shaping breaks down over such historical details as the leadership of the rebellion: Mackenzie is urban, middle class and an individual; Van Egmont a substantial property owner, so neither seems entirely appropriate as a "hero" model for the rural working class. The shaping becomes problematic because Salutin and Passe Muraille try to make the same play promote two interests that do not completely mesh: the cause of the common person against the privileged class, and the cause of a politically and culturally independent Canada against the continued influence of British institutions and standards. The latter seems a fitter metaphor for the state of Canadian theatre, especially as viewed from the perspective of the "alternative." Mackenzie and Van Egmont serve the second interest better than they serve the first, and while it is the spirit, effort and interests of settlers the play opens with, it is the business of modelling a "free Canada" that it closes on.

Individualism and individual response to the living, working and political hardships of settling and farming Upper Canada is the theme of three of the opening scenes: Walking, Clearing and The Tavern. The first challenge, as it was to be later for the settlers in Paper Wheat, is the physical environment: the distances and the trees. Thomas Campbell walks for four and a half days to find his plot of land, gets there and immediately begins to clear his land. He is alone, and alone responsible for the condition of the farm-site when his family arrives. This sort of rugged individualism, however, does not serve in the face of another challenge--the political and legal challenge to ownership. In the ironically named "Clearing," Peter Steadman is ordered off the land he and his family have spent two years clearing of trees and stumps. The magistrate informs him that the plot he has been clearing has just been granted to a Colonel Sparling. What the Steadmans have called homesteading the government chooses to call squatting. Steadman has only one response to the news; from force of habit he returns inappropriately to clearing the land he has already lost. Finally, in The Tavern, Fred Bench returns from Toronto, where he had gone to buy one hundred acres of government land for twenty dollars, only to see the land sold to a Mr. Bronlyn, a friend of the Commissioner, to be resold at a huge profit. The Commissioner supplies Bronlyn with the names of land

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applicants "for a little . . . consideration" (214)-part of a corrupt political conspiracy against the common man that this first Act goes on to expose in detail, beginning with the next scene "The Family Compact." Meanwhile, Bench and his friends use his twenty dollars to throw a party--again an inappropriate response, in that it does not solve or even address the problem: how do Bench and people like him get their fair share of land and justice?

In "The Family Compact" Mackenzie, the owner of the newspaper The Advocate (formerly The Colonial Advocate before he changed the name to symbolically "get rid of the 'Colonial' part" (209)), explains the "magic" that transforms a band of "thieves, rogues, villains and fools" into "the ruling class of this province" (215). The "magic" is simply the influence of connections. The one piece of magic more "mind-boggling" than how they take power, he claims, is the "magic" of how they stay in power (216). The audience already "knows" part of the answer to this--the settlers do not act decisively or effectively to challenge the actions of the government.

Such organization or activity is difficult, because the governor, Sir Francis Bond Head, threatens the colonials with repercussions if they elect members who would oppose him. Compounding Head's threats is the violence at the polls, where Tory bullies attack known Reform supporters. Effective organization begins at the end of "The Canadian

Farmer's Travels in the U.S.A.," a scene that could not have happened on a Canadian stage much earlier. Here, in an adaptation from Robert Davis' book by the same title, a Canadian farmer visits the U.S., sees a political system that does not rob and cheat the common man--though it does rob and cheat the Indians--and, seeing that there is a better way, chooses to return home and help educate his fellow Canadians in this "better way"-- a way that would replace a British colonial status and system with something more along the American model. The result of Davis' efforts is the "formation of a rubbery-legged band of Reformers who "cling to each other and anything they can find" (231). Agitation against the Family Compact accelerates to the end of Act One, as a "ventriloquist act" gives the farmer who is his "dummy" a strong and confident voice against the patronizing and paternalistic British colonial system and its inequities. By the end of the Act, at Lount's Forge, Reformers, tired of their inability to get action through legal means, thanks to Tory delaying tactics, are organizing and transforming themselves into Revolutionaries: making pikes seems more appropriate than further attempts to make laws.

The general pattern of identifying the villain and finding an effective means to confront the evil, the level of the rhetoric and the characterizations throughout obviously parallel the agitprop of Buffalo Jump, though other than director Paul Thompson, only one member of that collective--Miles Potter--worked on both productions. Rather than show the rebels as a misguided fringe element, Salutin and Company have attempted to show them as a concerned, dedicated group of Canadian patriots who tried to follow the legal and responsible path, only to be driven to revolution and violence by the violence and intransigence of the ruling class. Again, as had become a pattern at Passe Muraille, from Doukhobors onward, group action against government action develops out of necessity: if the government behaved fairly and responsibly in the first place, groups like the Sons of Freedom, the On-To-Ottawa-Marchers and the revolutionaries of 1837 would not have been necessary.

In Act Two, while the emphasis is on the response to Tory provocation, the issue of "heroism" becomes clouded. That is, in a play that seems dedicated to the idea of collective response to injustice, old-style "high mimetic" "hero-as-leader" aesthetics still prevail. Mackenzie remains the major spokesman, and some of his plans, if followed up on by the more timid committee he acts through, might have changed the outcome of the abortive rebellion. For example, had they seized the muskets at Toronto's City Hall, the rebels would not have had to face cannons armed mainly with pitchforks. The Committee remains more "Reform" than "Revolutionary" at this stage, however. As this decision stands within the play as one of the main causes of failure, it appears that "group" leadership limits its own success, and only individual leadership can work, though only then if it manages to be in the right place at the right time. Van Egmond cannot help rally the revolutionaries because the original attack is mistimed and he is not there. By the time he arrives, the forces are in disarray, dispirited, outnumbered and outgunned (somehow, in Canadian history plays, the conservative, repressive, imperialistic side always seems to be the side that has the cannons--see for example Riel and Passe Muraille's Almighty Voice).

Scenes of repression and vengeance follow the failed uprising, including a parade of prisoners in which the cast circles the stage, bound by ropes, identifying themselves as they pass across the front. Rebel survivors and their family "emigrate" to the U.S., and captured leaders like Lount and Matthews hang. Lount, who again has the final words in Act Two, as in Act One, provides the Passe Muraille audience with a clear "prophetic" model of an ideal Canadian society against which to measure their present reality: "This country will not have time to mourn a farmer and a blacksmith. It will be free, I am certain, long before our deaths have time to become symbols" (264). The irony not to be lost on the audience is that their deaths are, in fact, becoming symbols even as "Lount" speaks. Finally, as

Matthews observes "We lost," Lount gives a stereotypically Marxist response, tying the past to the present and the future: No! We haven't won yet" (264). These may be stirring words and sentiments, for the right audience with the appropriate conviction in the cause of Canadian cultural liberty, but there is something too pat and overly simplistic in the whole structure of the play, as a text, something that Passe Muraille's lively theatrical style and mythopoeic conviction might mask in performance.

Black Powder: Estevan 1931 was produced to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Estevan riot, the climax of a coal miners' strike in the southeastern corner of Saskatchewan in 1931. Like Medicare! it adopts, for a major portion of its text, words from the record of the event itself, though Rex Deverell, the playwright, acknowledges the reconstruction of scenes "where written contemporary material is unavailable" ("Black Powder:The Text" 72). This includes the character of the old miner (Hillis, Plainspeaking 77). However, while identifying other such scenes, Deverell insists that the "found" speech is more predominant than the created in the documentary texture of the play:

> "It comes off as a series of documentary material: speeches, reports, letters, and

> recollections of old-timers, with a few reconstructions spotted in here and there. For example, all we have is a copy of the [city council] resolution banning the parade, and we know that one alderman voted against it," so that scene is a creative guess at what might have been said.
>
> Another reconstruction is needed to fill the sketchy details remaining of the life of one of the miners killed in the riot. (Perkins, "Play expounds")

Another portion of the play that appears a dramatic creation is the framing sequence in the cemetery, in which "The Man" chisels information from the grave marker for the men killed in the riot, and tries to explain away his actions.

There is some argument between the playwright and the song writer on this project, however, over how much of the text is found and how much created. Geoffrey Ursell estimates that as much as "thirty of forty percent of that script" is "invented" (Hillis, Plainspeaking 205), and he sees no problem in this at all. Instead, in a statement that could stand as a position statement for historical playwrights in general, he notes that the artistic licence involved in creating scenes, characters and dialogue is "absolutely justifiable:"

> In a play, you're not trying to write accurate

> history and, to me, history is a kind of fiction. In a play, you're writing an elaborate fiction. You are concerned with the dramatic potential of scenes, the developments of characters, the overall structure. You set out to capture your audience, to entertain, to put across a point of view or stimulate awareness. (Hillis, Plainspeaking 205).

Deverell's public insistence on the documentary authenticity of the text might come partly from his uneasiness (and that of the director, Ken Kramer, artistic director of the Globe Theatre) at presenting a play on this issue in the Estevan region. Kramer, at the time of the special preview to mark the anniversary of the riot, admitted "I was scared. There are still a lot of deep divisions about it and I wasn't sure what would happen" (Miner). In such an atmosphere, Deverell notes, documentary is

> helpful especially in dealing with controversial or politically tendentious subjects because it lends an air of authority to the work. . . .
>
> [However,] it does not prevent an artist from twisting or exploiting the material to his own ends. ("Black Powder: The Text" 72).

Deverell's mention of the "Twisting or exploiting" of the material to suit his own ends links with Ursell's comment on putting across a point of view and stimulating awareness to suggest that apparent documentary authenticity rather than factual accuracy is Deverell's first concern here. Indeed, he seems to owe more allegiance to Cheeseman's instruction to "look for the shape of a show in the public events," and the shape he finds is overtly polarized and melodramatic, in spite of his use of the word "tragedy":

> . . . the story is actually not a complex one. There are few surprises or convolutions in the plot. The events proceed, one upon another, towards inevitable tragedy. It is a description of how people behave in times of extremity. To my mind it is an indictment of the systems, the conditions, and the motivations of its age with an ongoing relevance to our own times. Of course, not all labour conflicts are straightforward, but in this one the issues seem as *black as coal dust and as white as talc*." ("*Black Powder*: the Text" 72, emphasis added)

He further adds that the "contrasting rhetoric of the mine owners and the union organizers" (72) and the other background issues, such as the international economic upheaval of the Great Depression and local "technological warfare between the pit mines and the new strip mines" (73), "all of these polarities suggested I paint the story in stark contrasts."

To achieve this polarized presentation, Deverell turned to the conventions of agitprop, to paint the owners and their allies "black" and the miners and their allies "white," and to establish clearly his position on the rights and wrongs of the issues. This agitprop staging is readily apparent from the entrance of the cast. They come onto a blank stage, and begin to put on bits of miners' clothing. The miners tend to wear old, worn work clothes and to carry lunch pails. Also "arriving" on the set are a coal car "that can change into a platform, a table, a truck as the play progresses; the tombstone of the first and last scenes; barrels, supplies and tools for mining" (5). In particular the emphasis on the flexibility of the coal car suggests the agitprop, political nature of the action to follow.

The opening scene creates a group out of the individual miners by having them sing singly of their experience in the mines, but unite in a chorus that announces their joint resistance to orders to accept their lot:

> And they want us to be quiet
> They say when we complain
> "If you don't like it, pack your tools and go!"
> No goddamn chance
> No not a chance. (5)

Following this, "The Man" enters, dressed in "contemporary" clothes, "new, in contrast to the other costume pieces we have seen so far" (5). He is of the present, and from the newness of his clothes, probably also of a different "class" than the miners who preceded him. Holding a hammer and chisel, he kneels beside the marker and says to the audience, "Cheerful place to start" (7). He claims "all this," referring to the play as a whole, not just to the cemetery, is a "Communist Plot," all this "Agitating" and "Creating feelings." He is particularly irritated by the words "MURDERED . . . BY R.C.M.P." on the marker. Betraying his allegiances, he insists "But the police didn't murder them. And whoever says we did is a liar." So saying, he then takes his tools and chisels away the "R.C.M.P." from the stone and claims "You would have had to have been there, that day . . . " leading into a reenactment of the riot as he narrates his version of events, explaining that the miners, who clearly outnumbered the police, were "well juiced up on home brew and they were pulling open their shirts and yelling 'Shoot me! Shoot me!' and--well--some of them got accommodated" (8). The effect here is somewhat like the "real" versus the "mythical" fights in the Theatre Passe Muraille and Reaney Donnelly plays, as from here the action of the play fills in the background up to another scene at the close of the play that gives a far different version of events, a scene more sympathetic to the miners.

The build to this "factual" reenactment begins with a documentation of the working conditions in the mines, a scene that combines a dramatization of conditions with testimony from the royal commission into the riot. This leads into a scene introducing "The Manager," "Happy" Wilson, who, in contrast to the miners, always appear well and warmly dressed in a buffalo robe coat. For all his apparent physical comfort, he is a temperamental man, most "happy" when he is yelling the loudest, grinning the most broadly when he is firing a miner. "Happy" chases away a peddlar who has been selling eggs and fresh milk to the miners, commodities not carried by the company's "wonderful store" (13). This defence of the company store also introduces the first element of the anti-worker "conspiracy," which in this case consists of a scheme to keep them perpetually in debt to the company, and locked into a cycle of poor wages and wretched living conditions.

In typical agitprop style, the human interest side of the play seeks to build sympathy for the miners and their families. The mining families and their living conditions are depicted most vividly in the "reconstructed" (and more "realistic) lives of Julian and Katya Gryshko. In the first Gryshko family scene, which follows "The Manager," Julian arrives home to his "small, sparsely furnished" house (14); he is wet and cold, and needs new boots (which will have to be charged at the company store). He tells his wife he must go to work much earlier the next day, to clear the mine of water before he can actually go to work on the coal face. Katya shrugs resignedly that she will have to "put the porridge on--right after supper" (16). Then, in a good-natured and apparently long-suffering sort of way, they "embrace and laugh," lovingly united in adversity. The Gryshko story is a continuing, poignant sub-plot throughout, since we know from the tombstone that "arrived" earlier that Julian is one of the miners killed in the riot.

Further evidence of the owners' abuse of their employees emerges in another scene in which the owner congratulates his employees for a record production and announces a cash bonus "the equivalent of five hours pay at the regular thirty-five cent hourly wage' (17). He ends with "Needless to say, the usual deductions will apply and any outstanding debts at the Company Store will also be deducted." The "Old Miner" Deverell creates for this play does a quick calculation and realizes that "the bastards are stealin' coal from us" since all the miners combined were paid for less than half of the "record" tonnage the owner has just announced. Julian suggests "We gotta kick" (18), but the Old Miner brings him back to reality with "You want to keep your job?"

Wretched as conditions appear in these early scenes, later scenes only make things worse as the Depression and the arrival of open pit mining create problems for the pit mine owners, who compensate for their losses or reduced profits by cutting the wages of the miners, without warning. The results of this cut, portrayed in a dramatized scene with the Old Miner, are taken up in a documentary scene, repeating testimony again from the Royal Commission. Deteriorating conditions eventually lead to organization, in that "historical" pattern of problem-proposed solution-reaction-confrontation identified and discussed above in connection with such regional plays as Paper Wheat and Medicare! (also by Deverell), and obvious also in the feminist play What Glorious Times They Had, and, indeed, a common enough pattern of conflict within both historical and non-historical plays in general. The first attempts at joint action also produce an early victory, as the racist manager who sings of "these foreign scum" is forced to rehire the Old Miner, here named Parker, whom he has just fired for union activities on the mine site. (The manager's racism and anti-semitism are answered and put into a different perspective in Act Two by an union representative who denies the importance of religion, since "My religion is loyalty to the working class," and thanks a Jewish couple who have boarded her for their kindness and generosity). Act One ends with Julian and the Old Miner announcing happily that "things have changed" (33).

Much as Act One began with the policeman's irritation and attempt to explain things from his perspective, Act Two begins with a song in which the whining mine owners complain of their sad lot in a song called "The Owner's Troubles." The song works ironically against the Owner, however, in that his complaints are about the behaviour of the miners who "charge more at the company store / Than they'll ever make from mining coal all year" (35). The song raises the question of how this is possible, and recalls the cycle of debt and poverty that is at the root of the miners' union activity.

Act Two also introduces historical figures from outside the Estevan region, people such as Jimmy Sloan, who tries in the first half of the second act to get the union recognized, and Annie Buller, who comes in later, as an agitator and resolve-stiffener for the striker miners. Sloan comes in right after the disgruntled owner, and where the owner had spoken in the first person singular, "I don't lose easy (36)" Sloan speaks in the plural, saying of the struggle the miners have embarked upon, "We're going to win it!" Sloan recites a catalogue of hardships imposed upon the miners by the owners, then lists the populations of other miners and workers who allegedly stand behind the miners in their fight, a list that includes the thirteen million workers from Soviet Russia, a bit of news that lends some credence to "The Man's" red-baiting opening. From this scene, a note of international labour interest and rhetoric enters into the local dispute, emphasized by the song "Workers":

> The Workers of the world
> Are with us here today

The Workers of the world
Will make the bosses pay! (38)

At the Gryshko home, Katya tries to rein in Julian's unionizing enthusiasm, accusing him of having been to the Ukranian (sic) Labour Temple too much and sounding "like a Red" (39). He draws a metaphor between the blowing of coal in the mine, of finding just the right charge to produce the desired result, and finding the right solution for their difficulties. To Katya's tears and fears, he answers "They want to keep us afraid, you know" (39), and claims that togetherness is the answer to the threats and fear.

Two short scenes follow, "The Revolutionary Stew" with its tales of intra-class violence and agitation, and "Positions," which documents the hardening of "bargaining" positions between the owner and the miners. In a technique like one he used in Medicare!, in which the present comments on the past, Deverell "drags in" Ken More from 1981 to explain that most Estevan area residents were not taken in by the double talk of the owners, and recognized that the owners "plain didn't want a Union" (42). This leads to an almost obligatory scene of management/government collusion common in class history plays, as the Saskatchewan government, represented here by Deputy Minister of Labour T. M. Molloy, first promises Sloan to help get the union recognized, then turns around and shares information with the owner. The government itself seems, or feels, threatened by the scope of the union's activity, as outlined in the Constitution of the Workers Unity League, which calls for the "final overthrow of capitalism and for the establishment of . . . a Revolutionary Workers Government" (44). Molloy then publicly announces his inability to make any progress in bringing the two sides together, because of the unwillingness of Sloan, and returns to Regina.

Following fruitless efforts to get the union recognized, the miners go out on strike, and the situation deteriorates rapidly. Scabs are hired, but are bullied away from working by the miners. Annie Buller delivers a long speech reminding the miners of the large force of labourers behind them, and of those who have displayed courage in similar circumstances in the past. That is, she reminds the miners (and the audience) of the history of labour conflict in Canada and around the world, and places the miners into that continuity. Countering Buller's rhetoric is the owner's press release, which denies the charges of poor working conditions, and condemns what it brands as mob law, something that can only happen because inadequate police protection has been provided for the mines and the scabs.

This reference to adequate protection sets the stage for the entry of the R.C.M.P. into the fight, provided they are given grounds in law. As the Inspector puts it, "We were prepared to act upon any information laid by the mine operators or anyone who had a grievance" (51). The police involvement on the side of government and management against the "reds" who are so obviously against "law and order" emerges in a song, "Law and Order," in which two officers clean their rifles while declaring their readiness to keep the reds in line "when they're spoiling for a fight" (54), a line that suggest the police, who work for "Mr. R. B. Bennett / For his Parliament and Senate," had prejudged the situation and the strikers, and had already decided upon "appropriate" action.

With the players all set for the final confrontation, the city council gives the police the grounds they need, passing an ordinance against any parades or meetings, by strikers or owners, in the city that day. However, the miners load themselves and families into the trucks and head for town anyway. The fact that they bring their families and speak of a "nice picnic" tends to undermine any claims they planned violence in Estevan that day, counter to claims by "The Man" earlier that the strikers had laid in piles of rocks and carried sticks and clubs. In fact, as the parade heads into town, the first report of clubs being used points at the police, as the Old Miner warns: "The police are going balmy! They're swinging their sticks. Somebody's going to get hurt" (58). When the city police try to arrest the Old Miner, in a scene that parallels the attempt by The Manager to fire him at the close of Act One, his comrades close ranks around him, stones in hand. This version of events seeks to show the miners as responding to provocation, not as planning violence. In the standoff, as the stones fly, the police open fire, into the ground first, then into the air, but finally into the truck carrying Julian, and at two other miners nearby. There is none of the drunken bravado depicted in the opening sequence.

The denouement is swift and brutal. After a brief appearance by Dr. Creighton, in a scene reminiscent in Medicare!, in which he explains his refusal to treat the injured strikers treatment unless they could pay in advance, Katya runs in from her car near the end of the parade, seeking Julian. Her final words are a song lamenting her loss, and comparing the burning of coal with the "angry fire" raging within her now--establishing a solidarity of purpose with her now-dead husband. In "Aftermath," the police are cleared of wrongdoing, and Annie Buller, cited for her ability to "stir up the feelings of the workers" (61), a line that establishes the linkage between the judge then and "The Man" at the opening, is sentenced to a year of hard labour for her role in the strike, as things return to normal.

The play ends at "The Funeral," as the Union Man mourns "our departed brothers," and recounts their "ambitions and hopes" held in common with the mourners. The Man appears beside this scene, and intercuts the eulogy with his defence of police actions. As he sees it, the union was smashed, "that one, anyway" (62), but the catch comes in the eulogy, as the Union Man reminds the living that the dead "have . . . left us a duty" to seek "the rewards for which they hoped." The Man cannot understand why "people keep harping on it," and wonders "Why won't the dead stay buried?" His answer, and the audience's comes in the final "voice," that of the united men and women singing "Spirit of Change," with its acknowledgement of the spirit and power that come out of the earth and coal, the "power of change" (63). Clearly, while the martyrs created in the riot lie dead, they serve as models of "right" behaviour, and are part of that "spirit" that comes from underground.

Black Powder was enthusiastically received at its Estevan preview, giving it a standing ovation (Miner). Ustun Reinart, writing for the left-wing magazine Canadian Dimension, saw in the retelling of this "dark sad tale of defeat" a transformation of "that defeat into strength" (29):

> Communities still need rituals to see themselves in new ways, and to give birth to "new" realities out of the ruins of the old. To relive shared pain in ritual means to grasp hold of that pain, to gain insight and to grow in strength. Theatre which reflects back to a community its shared defeat, provides it with that ritual, helps create new myths. It identifies the source of

> oppression, it bonds the community, it heals and strengthens it. (31)

In contrast, critics from across Canada, attending the Canadian Theatre Today Conference in Saskatoon, in October 1981, protested in particular the play's agitprop style and its simplistic interpretation of events. Ray Conlogue, of the Globe and Mail, found the presentation a "condescending" way to make the event better known ("Isolation"), while Brian Brennan of the Calgary Herald termed it a "high school history lesson masquerading as art" ("New plays"). The opposing reactions indicate something of the local and class appeal of the material and the popular theatre style it is presented through, and suggest, too, something of the limits of evaluations based on national, homogenous "standards."

There is also at work here, at times, a certain blindness to the conventions of both agitprop and documentary. When Black Powder moved into The Globe, it was a box office success, popular with the Regina audience for which it was ostensibly created, but the local newspaper reviews panned the play for not ever

> fulfilling the promise of being a drama. . . . No character, for example, is thoroughly developed. Instead, Deverell relies on class and ethnic stereotypes which diminish their humanity and undermines a dimension of the workers'courage. . . . (Barlow)

He also protested the costuming, particularly how the owners' "fancy jackets and cigars are incongruously worn with what look like miners' trousers." Since agitprop and presentational documentary theatre rely on suggestive costume touches to differentiate classes and characters, any other kind of costuming would have been intrusive and "unconventional." Judged against the standards of mimetic, realistic drama, presentational, documentary theatre cannot but fail to "measure up." The question remains, does the play measure up against the standards of either the agitprop conventions within which it was written, or the standards of documentary authenticity?

Even one of its founders, Erwin Piscator, found the agitprop style worked best for short pieces, and found it too limited for large halls and longer pieces (Innes 42), so this attempt at an extended piece might well have been partly doomed from the start. However, the greater problem, in the end, is that the agitprop and documentary conventions compete with each other. Deverell certainly wants to "borrow" authenticity for his interpretation of (or "twist" on) events from the documentary tradition. Even though Deverell finds much of his dialogue in the public record and the recollections of participants, and bases his dramatic characterizations on such sources, the obvious fictionalization inherent in the agitprop form largely overwhelms the "authority" such documentary techniques are supposed to impart. In particular, the agitprop form is so intrusive that it invalidates any claim that by using the words of the dispute the play is an attempt to "try to tell the story in its own terms and let it dictate its own message" (Deverell, "Black Powder: The Text" 72).

To his surprise, Deverell

> found that some critics of the play refused to believe (or found "unbelievable") lines which had been quoted directly from the record. This proves, I suppose, that what is true cannot always convince.

The disbelief suggests something further, that artistic decisions can invalidate or inauthenticate historical "reality" if theatrical style establishes a context which robs the words of credibility. The documentary approach Deverell employs derives its historical authority from giving, or appearing to give, fair play to the range of voices and issues. Merely quoting from the record does not guarantee that words will be accepted without question as a fair and accurate account of what happened, even if they are a repetition of what someone actually said. It appears words and actions must earn credibility within some operative standards of dramatic or historical verisimilitude, and that the agitprop caricaturing in Black Powder oversteps the bounds of credibility, or at least of critical credulity.

Despite his expressed desire that the play might promote the "healing of old wounds" (Reinart 31), Deverell seems more interested in the "agitation" root of agitprop, and to want to stir public indignation towards what was done and what needs yet to be done. That is, much as his agitprop style largely undercuts the documentary authenticity of his telling, his political purpose largely overrides any "regional" interests of creating a sense of local community, of reconciling disparate interests into a cohesive whole. It is beyond credibility, for example, that Katya's descendants (biological or political) could find sympathy or joint cause with those of the apologetic (in its Latin sense of "defensive") and revisionist "Man." Like Salutin, among others, Deverell looks for proof of continuous (or continuable) resistance or revolutionary effort in and from the past as a model for the present in its ongoing work and responsibility to create a better future. In this instance, he seeks, more than anything else, to promote collective action as a way out of similar or analogous social and economic cycles of defeat. Perhaps this is why, except for an audience composed of those from whose region the story comes, and who, therefore already "own" it as part of their history, Black Powder, as social polemic and as theatre of protest, has demonstrated audience appeal mainly among the "converted" of class struggle and has been rejected as "history," except of the more puerile kind, by those with no vested interest in the story.

Ultimately, all of these final three plays seek in part to build, or to build on, a "legendary base" that re-creates some of the "losers" from Canada's past as martyred "winners," not just for the side they took, as in Charbonneau and Le Chef, but for the actions they took in fighting a united battle against their oppressors. Their collective effort at revolution, as against Charbonneau's essentially individual act of protest, serves as a model for the audience, and a call for collective action to redress the same range of wrongs in the present, to reform the country into the kinder, fairer entity it could have been had not the "wrong" side prevailed at earlier potential turning points in our collective narrative.

There is a common thread that unites these class plays with a wider concern with "reform" evident in the plays discussed in the earlier chapters. Many of the "regional" plays have sought to show how the Canadian experience was not necessarily kind or fair for a region trying to establish itself in the face of the established interests of the powerful "centre," or to show that the settlement process, the business of building or fitting into a community, was not always a positive experience or a positive reflection on the majority. The "women's" plays have sought to show how the Canadian experience has not been universally kind or fair from the perspective of women seeking political equality in the face of the established power of men. The "race plays" have sought to show how the Canadian experience has not been kind or fair from the perspective of aboriginal people or selected immigrant populations in the face of militarily more powerful invaders or socially and politically more established interests. So too, the "class" plays have sought to show how the Canadian experience has failed to be kind and fair from the perspective of the economically disadvantaged and their allies. Just as the others tried to persuade their audiences to change their thinking and actions in the present to alter the situation for the future, the class plays rest on a desire to show that change is desirable and possible within established, "Canadian," historical models of right and progressive thought and action.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

"Local" History and the "National" Dramatic Canon

In the Introduction, I noted that the range of historical subject matter and focus chosen by the contemporary Canadian theatre and its playwrights mirrored the subject matter and focus taken by historians of the same period. That is, they have generally chosen, up to the mid-1980s, at least, to focus on the experiences of selected parts of the population within Canada, rather than on the "national" experience as a whole. This has resulted in a large body of plays whose initial appeal, at least, seems to have been to a target audience who could recognize the experience as its own on something other than a "national" level, as the classification of the plays, and often of target audiences, within the historical perspective of regional, gender, racial or class experience suggests. In creating such a body of plays aimed at reaching populations "where they live," the theatre has either acknowledged or demonstrated an observation put forth by Northrop Frye. In The Bush Garden, Frye observes that in Canada "[i]dentity is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture; unity is national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in political feeling" (ii). The concept of what is "regional" or "local," however, as George Ryga has emphasized, extends functionally beyond the geographical to include a broad range of other defining qualities that can single a population out from the whole. That is, "region" or locale" are as much a matter of shared experience or anxiety as of shared geography. The marginalized interest groups presented in plays of region, gender or class, in particular (the "race plays" are, as I suggested above, in Chapter Five, a different matter, addressed as they seem to be to the victimizing "side," rather than to the victimized) feel their particular problems and find their identity at the edges of power. The characters often identify not with "Canada" but with others in the same "locale of common purpose" against the homogenizing, unifying pull of the centre, or of some more distant imperial power.

Given this important, defining issue of locale of common purpose, I have sought to emphasize throughout the nature or identity of the intended original audience, whether as identified by the playwright or the originating company, or as suggested by evidence internal to the plays themselves. At the same time I have sought to evaluate the plays' successes in recognizing important events in the history of those audiences or interest groups, and in creating coherent, effective organization and presentation of their subject matter to entertain and educate those groups while also defining for them their own historical experience. Reaction of this "local" audience, the one for whom the plays can be seen to have been written, is, furthermore, I think, an important barometer of their "success," though this has not always been recognized by "outsiders," who have at times tried to place such plays within a larger, more "national" or "universal" perspective.

The differences in critical perspective between "locals" and "outsiders" is evident, for example, in the responses to Black Powder: Estevan 1931. At a preview for its target audience, in southern Saskatchewan, it proved a powerful piece of theatre. Later, on tour and in Regina at the Globe Theatre, the play drew capacity audiences. Yet in between, when the play had its "official" premier run at the Canadian Theatre Today conference in Saskatoon in October, 1981, it, and indeed, most of the shows from that conference, drew almost unanimous condemnation from the "national" critics. The headline on an overview of the shows by Ray Conlogue of the Globe and Mail, for example, is "Isolation bane of West's theatre" (10 Oct., E 12). Conlogue draws particular attention to Black Powder as a "political cartoon" and as "anti-theatre." Brian Brennan, of the Calgary Herald, went so far as to suggest that with songs by Americans Woodie Guthrie and Pete Seeger added, Black Powder might be able to succeed "as a piece of entertainment" (10 Oct., D6). To critics and audiences with no direct interest in the story itself, or in the lives and events put on stage, the play lacked enough "universal" appeal, artistic merit, or depth to stand as "good" theatre. Despite such negative evaluation from "outside, the popularity of this and other shows, such as Colley's The Donnellys or Theatre Passe Muraille's Them Donnellys, within limited localities, is a measure of success, regardless of whether or not the plays go on to "national" or "international" recognition.

In accepting and analyzing many of these plays as significant representations of the historical experience of groups smaller than "the nation," groups who appear explicitly or implicitly as the original target audience, I am, admittedly, influenced by the caveat issued in 1980 by Mavor Moore, in "An Approach to Our Beginnings: Transplant, Native Plant or Mutation." However, Moore's influence in the main is to strengthen my own personal sense of where to look for the worth or potential worth of such plays. Moore's most important advice is to consider the influence of audience, and to recognize a play's tacit address "to whom it may concern." He warns against what he sees as the equally dangerous "standards" of universalism (or internationalism) and nationalism in evaluating art in general, drama in particular. The universal standard, he warns, is "reductive": its "true aim is homogenization" (14), while nationalism is "a misnomer for the local expression of that impulse." By international standards, he warns, "any attempt to be original--that is, to add a new dimension, a new insight, to the world's art--is bound to be seen as a failed attempt to be a la mode" (15). By extension, an attempt to examine or add the historical experiences of a population defined by a locality or sphere of shared interest smaller than the nation as a whole, as the experience of Black Powder: Estevan 1931 suggests, is potentially subject to the same sort of reductive evaluation. At the same time, it must be recognized that, regardless of their intended original or "ideal" audience, some of these plays have gone on to national prominence, or have demonstrated an appeal outside the region or interest group in or for which they were apparently created. Paper Wheat and Reaney's Donnelly trilogy, for example, attracted considerable attention, and often large audiences, on national tours. Of note as well is the fact that several of these plays have found their way into the three major anthologies of modern Canadian drama: Jerry Wasserman's Modern Canadian Plays, Richard Perkyns' Major Plays of the Canadian Theatre: 1934-1984, and Richard Plant's The Penguin Book of Modern Canadian Drama. According to Richard Paul Knowles ("Voices (off)"91-2), these three anthologies have gained canonical status as representing the "best" of modern Canadian drama. There must be some connecting principle that allows works representing the history of life at the margins of Canadian society to find favour even among elements of the population whose particular experience is not represented on stage. This connecting principle emerges out of the shaping of events, rather than out of the events themselves.

Though there is great formal variety among the plays presented here, and much evident experimentation, particularly with the presentational and documentary forms, beneath the surface there is an evident conformity of the dominant dramatic mode: the melodramatic. Ironically, modern playwrights have again found useful, as did their nineteenth-century forebears, the "David and Goliath" shape behind such earlier plays about the War of 1812 as Curzon's Laura Secord or Mair's Tecumseh. In this frequent shaping of events into confrontations between the small, marginal interests and large "central" interests, the didactic objectives seem to have interfered with the theatrical. Rather than find or invent appropriate theatrical or dramatic forms or shapes to deal with the complexities of issues or events--that could accommodate ways that Canadians have been different but equal, for example--the writers have more often sought to define the event within the convenient theatrical shape of the battle between virtue and vice, that is, between interests that are not only different but unequal, not just economically or politically, but morally. Within this configuration, we have seen "good" take the local form of "The West," "The North," "The Outsider," a "New World" ethic, indigenous populations, non-British immigrants, women, and the working class and its allies.

The "local habitation of evil," to return to Heilman's useful phrase, has taken the form of "The East," "The South," big business, professional associations, entrenched settlers, an "Old World" ethic, imperialistic interests, men or vacilating women, and the owning or ruling class. The "good" is always depicted as the "little guy," who may not win, but certainly should have.

Perhaps surprisingly often, given their claimed status as "cultural nationalists," within this melodramatic master shape these writers and theatres have often created works critical of "Canada" as a political or social construct or entity designed to serve the interests of some large, powerful, centralizing interest group. In those plays where "Canada" enters into the action, it usually does so on the side of "vice," and appears as some threatening or confining "other." Canada is not the only threatening "other," by any means, as _Paper Wheat_, _The Shipbuilder_ or _The Great Wave of Civilization_, for example, demonstrate, but the negative role or characterization of "Canada" or "Ottawa" is frequent enough to be a commonplace worth remarking on. Sometimes, as in _Davin: The Politician_, this "other" appears as a homogenizing centre that seeks to limit the role of the margin. Sometimes, as in race relations plays such as _Walsh_ and _The Komagata Maru Incident_, or class plays such as _Buffalo Jump_, or _1837: The Farmers' Revolt_, it appears as the seat of a political or economic power or interest that shuts others off from opportunity. Even in The Fighting Days, it is the "national" interest that forces Nellie to compromise on her earlier, gender-based, position and standards. Only in a play such as Billy Bishop Goes to War, where Billy represents "Canada," in conflict with the interests and standards of the larger Empire, does Canada, cast as the marginalized half of a similar conflict, emerge (albeit comically) as something more "positive" and virtuous.

A few history plays, Paper Wheat, Medicare! and What Glorious Times They Had, for example, show the side of virtue triumphant. Even the "triumph" plays, however, occasionally end on an implied warning that the victory is only partial (as in What Glorious Times They Had), or compromised (as in Medicare!). Even Paper Wheat, with its nostalgic old-timer wishing to be young again, and to feel that he could "change the world," suggests that something remains to be changed. More commonly, as in The Fighting Days, or all of the class plays, they show the struggle as ongoing, and the moral maturation of Canada as incomplete. In dramatizing this spirit of resistance, these plays have, paradoxically, fulfilled a "national" role, not in identifying heroes so much as in defining for their time and place a necessary and essentially "Canadian" historic heroic action--resistance in the name of reform.[24]

In adopting, consciously or unconsciously, this master shape, and promoting this action, the writers and directors have been influenced, it would seem, by both the realities and the resultant cultural myth of the place of "Canadian" drama on the "nation's" stages. Most of the plays discussed in the preceding chapters were, as mentioned, the work of "alternative," or "alternative-minded" writers and theatres. New Canadian plays were virtually shut out from the "mainstream" regional theatres, giving the new writers and the theatres that produced their works a sense themselves of being "Davids" up against the "Goliath" of the "established" canon of classics and international hits. They seem to have developed an affinity for tales that, in the history of the constituent parts of "the country," reflect their own cultural marginalization.

There is another possible explanation for the pervasiveness of this shape and the myth behind it, and that is a perceived "national" taste. It is, after all, at the level of this essential myth of the ongoing struggle between virtuous but small and repressed "margins" and somehow vice-ridden but large and repressive "centres" that the history plays merge with the pattern and myth that seems to appeal to the defining taste and ideology behind what some at least define as the emergent "national" canon of drama and theatre. That is, the melodramatic shaping of Canadian history into a battleground between historically disadvantaged interest groups and some larger power parallels a taste in "realistic" drama for similar conflicts.

"Realistic" drama, Knowles observes,

> frequently focuses on the so-called underprivileged--the handicapped, prisoners, native groups, or the poor--but it usually does so in such a way as to place its audiences in the position of voyeurs or of self-congratulatory liberal "concerned spectators." The audience in these plays witnesses a crisis--the central structural principle of realist drama--that is interpretable as deviation from the social norm that is restored at the play's resolution. (99)[25]

Within the three anthologies mentioned above, upon which Knowles bases his analysis, plays such as David Freeman's Creeps, John Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes (which appears in all three anthologies, making it, one must suppose, the "most Canadian" of all), George Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, and David Fennario's Balconville let their audiences look in on the negative in Canadian society and feel good about seeing what is wrong with things as they are. The history plays that "make it" into these anthologies offer a similar chance to look in from outside, and to see what was and has been wrong with things as they were, and in many cases still are. That is, replacing the adjective "realistic" with the adjective "historical" in this analysis does little to change the accuracy of the analysis, and in part explains how plays that effectively criticise the effect of nation building and cultural and political homogenization can find "national" acceptance, in spite of the fact that they seem to work against the interests and ideology behind the creation and identification of a canon of "national" dramatic literature.

The development of a definitive "national" dramatic and theatrical canon for Canada has long been seen as highly desirable.[26] Arthur Beverly Baxter proclaimed in 1916 that it was part of the "law of nations, and the law of individuals and the law of Nature" that Canada would and should "seek artistic expression" of her national consciousness in drama. Another prominent spokesperson was Martha Allan, founder of the Montreal Repertory Theatre. She asked fellow Canadians "are we not justified in dreaming of a creative theatre in Canada, which will provide civilized entertainment, stimulate the other arts, and become a medium of national expression?" (2,13). Allan was one of many who saw the existence of a national drama as a measure of the national soul. Her claim, smacking of social and cultural Darwinism, that "[d]ramatic expression is inextricably mixed with the social order which passes through a series of cycles from chaotic origins to a balanced and mature completion" (13) echoes the sentiments of Lord Bessborough, a year earlier, when he told the inaugural gathering of the Dominion Drama Festival "The spirit of a nation, if it is to find full expression, must include a National Drama." All of these calls focus on the ideal of a homogeneous national identity, and to look to drama to isolate and imitate the essence of "Canada" and of "Canadian."

The work of the modern professional Canadian playwrights and theatres, at least when dealing with historical subjects, seems a direct contradiction of this "nationalistic" enterprise. Knowles looks to Alan Sinfield and the perspectives of cultural materialism to explain how canonical decisions on the "best" of Canadian theatre serve the tastes and interests of liberal "bourgeois mainstream" for the "universal" and the "individual," rather than their ideological opposites, the marginalized "historical" and "social" (91-95). It is this second pairing, within which, Sinfield argues, "meaning is made by people together in determinate conditions and where it might be contested" (141), that seems to define the focus of the history plays. Yet, paradoxically, within those three anthologies that either claim or have had claimed for them "canonical" status as representative of the "best" or "most important" plays of the modern Canadian theatre, we find Buffalo Jump, two of the three Reaney Donnelly plays, Walsh and 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, as well as the older Riel and the more "individual/national" Billy Bishop Goes to War. At the level of political purpose, Buffalo Jump and 1837 would seem unlikely candidates for any "national" canon. After all, if playwrights such as Salutin, Bolt, etc. had their way, "bourgeois society" with its defining ideology would disappear from Canada. Those who in earlier, pre-professional times issued the calls for a national drama, and their inheritors, would, presumably, be dismayed by a dramaturgy that includes plays that identify that Canadian essence as the fight against centralizing tendencies that limit group interest (or as we have seen in the plays of Ken Mitchell, or in Pollock's Walsh, representative individual interests), and would tend to push such plays to the margins of their canon as unacceptable, or as "negative" thinking.

However, such history plays do "fit in," in the final analysis, because, as well as feeding a "national" taste for tales of the disadvantaged or underprivileged, in a curiously mixed intent both to irritate and yet also to reassure, they also reaffirm a belief in Canada as a whole. As irritants, as goads to the collective liberal conscience, all the plays discussed above seek to identify moments when Canada or Canadians, or the cultural ancestors of Canadians, behaved badly. In the case of some history plays, such as Paper Wheat or What Glorious Times They Had, theatre manages either to suggest, rather naively, that such moments of bad behaviour were resolved, at least for their time and place. By far the greater number of the plays discussed have sought to identify moments when Canada or Canadians missed an opportunity to take the morally right (which frequently means the politically "left") direction. Yet even here, while the moment may be lost, the impulse--the affirmative, reformist attitude--remains. In such cases, theatre manages to indulge a liberal taste for protest against the sins of the past, and at the same time affirm (in lines such as Lount's "We haven't won yet" at the close of 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, or Katya's song at the close of Black Powder: Estevan 1931) a faith that with continued effort modelled on virtuous, right thinking efforts of the past, all can be repaired, and the "right" order prevail.

After all, the marginalized groups--regions, women and classes in particular--do not tend to work towards the breakup of the country, but towards a greater share of the "national" wealth and for the fairer, more equitable social and political whole that, the plays imply, has always been potential in Canada. It is in this closing vision of the essential action and desirable end of Canadian history that these plays move back towards the more traditional focus of historical drama--the nation itself. Though they praise resistance, even the plays of "defeat" do not dispense with the image of a "finished" Canada, or even the "Peaceable Kingdom" found in earlier historical plays. That is, the ideal of a "Canada the Good" is not, after all banished from the stage. Rather, the hope remains, but the essence that will realize this ideal is relocated away from the historical centres of power, those "habitations of evil," and grounded in the experience of those marginalized in the past, to be realized in some more perfect, though not necessarily imminent, future.

NOTES

[1] Definitions of historical drama abound. In addition to definitions by Lindenberger, Ribner, and Ursell (Hillis, Plainspeaking 205) mentioned elsewhere in the text, see also Thomas Percy, Reliques of English Poetry (1765), In Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage: Vol 4, 1753-1765, Ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976) 544; Samuel Johnson, Johnson on Shakespeare (Oxford University Press, 1908, repub. 1959) 17, 25; E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944) 320-21; Matthew H. Wikander 3, 7; John Wilders, The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays (London: Macmillan, 1978) 6; and Jonathan Hart, Theatre and World: The Problematics of Shakespeare's History, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992) especially Chapter One.

[2] Lodge owes much to Roman Jakobson and his study on the implications of aphasia, a speech defect which results in either "contiguity disorder," or the inability to combine linguistic elements in sequence, or in "similarity disorder," an inability to substitute one element for another. See Jakobson, Fundamentals of Language (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1975).

[3] The connection between historical drama and nationalism, or national unity, (implied in Rubin's title, above) is mentioned, for example, by Frye, Anatomy of Criticism; Ribner 14; and Tillyard 320-21.

[4] Further to Filewod's examination of didacticism in Canadian historical plays, see Jonathan Hart's summary of the tradition of linking drama with didacticism in Chapter One of Theatre and World. John Arden, for one, acknowledges the "didactic" implications, or "direct message" (xi) of Left-Handed Liberty: A Play About Magna Carta (London: Methuen, 1965): "I suppose it is that an agreement on paper is worth nothing to anybody unless it has taken place in their minds as well" (xii).

[5] Like Elizabethan historical dramas that, according to Tillyard and Ribner, see Elizabethan England as the "end" of a divine providential order, nineteenth-century Canadian "Canadian Imperialist" historical plays also see their Canada as the "end" of an ideal process--though the guiding and protecting hand is usually that of Mother England.

[6] This definition also seems to define the philosophical and historiographical approaches of Bertolt Brecht, at least as defined by Wikander: "By formulating a theatrical means of presenting the past as alterable and ephemeral, Brecht could crowd his stage with alternatives" (236). Brecht's epic stage style is also important in

Canadian historical playwriting; see especially the discussion on Hardin, chapter Five, below, and Don Kerr's introductory article to Paper Wheat: The Book: "Paper Wheat: Epic Theatre in Saskatchewan."

[7] Samuel Johnson (Johnson on Shakespeare) seems to stand uniquely and problematically against the centrality of dramatic shaping in historical plays (Shakespeare's, at any rate):

> His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the actions be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. (25)

How the actions and characters can be understandable, affecting, consistent, natural and/or distinct without some recognizable generic shape or controlling myth becomes the nagging and unanswered question.

[8] In addition to other critical studies of melodrama by Peter Brooks and Eric Bentley, cited elsewhere, see also Robertson Davies, The Mirror of Nature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), and Frank Rahill, The World of Melodrama (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967).

[9] Canadian Review of Comparative Literature, June/September, 1991, is a special issue on Renaissance Narrative and Drama, though the concentration is more on the role of narrative in drama, rather than on historical dramas and their relationship to that longer narrative called history. See Hart, Theatre and World, however, where he notes that one of the essentials of the history play is that it "demands succession, a sequel" (25).

[10] Ideological background and assumptions have become central critical issues among new historicists and cultural materialists, (see Jonathan Hart, "New Historicism: Taking History into Account," ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature 22.1 (Jan. 1991): 93-107, and Theatre and World, 254-63). The (mainly American) new historicists have included feminists and Marxists, while, as Jonathan Dollimore argues, the (mainly British) cultural materialists examine ideology (see, for example, his summary of the ideology of Renaissance England):

> This combined emphasis on universal interests, society as a "reflection" of the "natural" order of things, history as a "lawful" development leading up to and justifying the present, the demonizing of dissent and otherness, was central

> to the age of Shakespeare. ("Introduction: Shakespeare, cultural materialism and the new historicism," Political Shakespeare, 7).

Cultural materialism also comes into play during investigations into the ideological assumptions behind canonical decisions about what is or is not "representative" of the work in a genre, period or place. See, for example, Alan Sinfield, "Give an account of Shakespeare and Education, showing why you think they are effective and what you have appreciated about them. Support your comments with precise references," in Political Shakespeare 134-57. Chapter Seven, below, looks at the place of the history plays in a Canadian canon of contemporary or "modern" drama and theatre.

[11] As reference in the Introduction to Peter Cheeseman and the Victoria Theatre at Stoke-on-Trent suggests, "regional" concerns are not unique to Canada in the modern period. In 1964-65, the Victoria produced two local collective history plays: The Jolly Potters, which dealt with nineteenth-century working conditions in the pottery towns (a local concern), and with the Chartist riots (a national concern), and The Staffordshire Rebels, mentioned above. Both place local events within the scheme of national events, however, looking at how the larger events were played out locally, or involved local figures. A similar observation can be made of Caryl Churchill's Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (1974, with Joint Stock Company), which also looks at national events through the prism of a specific region. The Canadian regional plays (a somewhat oxymoronic classification, to be sure) tend to want to define the region and regional experience, as something apart, though that which they are "apart" from is, often enough, Canada.

[12] Cave differs here rather obviously from those, like Frye, Ribner and Tillyard, who see the essence of the history play in the "life" of the state, region, group, etc. This seems a more "Romantic" reading of history, the sort that led to Goethe's Egmont (1787) or Schiller's Mary Stuart (1800). Yet even here, the "individuals" play prominent roles in the life of the state, which must put them down to survive.

[13] The Golden Age, as well as the "New Eden" image already encountered in Davin: The Politician, is a recurring idea in Canadian historical plays, particularly those dealing with clashes between aboriginal peoples and white Europeans (see chapter 5). The Golden Age also links at times with pastoralism (see note 21, below), tied as both are with some mythically ideal "pre-historic" to "extra-historic" time that contrasts with a degraded or "decadent"

present. See Harry Levin, The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969).

[14] How much this uneven response has to do with the subject matter, and how much with local promotion or the lack thereof, or even with local critical interest or disinterest, is a matter of conjecture. See, for example, James Noonan, "The Critics Criticized: An Analysis of of Review of James Reaney's The Donnellys on National Tour." Canadian Drama 3 (Aut. 1977): 34-51.

[15] The emphasis on mask and story echoes the concern with mythos of Northrop Frye. Reaney was a student of, and has explained his debt to, Frye. See Reaney's "The Identity Effect, "CEA Critic 42 (Jan. 1980): 26-31, and "Some Critics are Music Teachers," Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye, ed. Eleanor Cook et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 298-308. In addition, there is in Reaney's Donnelly treatment a close affinity to another influenced by Frye: Margaret Atwood, whose Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972) includes Frye and Reaney in its dedication. Reaney's Donnellys seem to be "Position Three" to "Position Four" non-victims: they see they are victimized, "but refuse to accept the assumption that the role is inevitable" (37), then, especially in the cases of Judith and Will, move ahead to be "creative non-victim[s]" (38).

[16] Compare with Heilman's definitions of a tragic hero: "There is a pulling apart within the personality, a disturbance, though not a pathological one, of integration" (7), and "In melodrama, man is seen in his strength or his weakness; in tragedy, in his strength and weakness at once" (90).

[17] Prentice, et al. include substantial and useful notes and bibliography on contemporary Canadian feminist history and historiography.

Essential reading on feminist drama and theatre include Helene Keyssar, Feminist Theatre: An Introduction to Plays of Contemporary British and American Women (London: Macmillan, 1984); Sue-Ellen Case, Feminism and Theatre (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), and Performing Feminism: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); and Michelene Wandor, Carry On, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986). Among prominent British feminist playwrights to explore the role of and repressive attitudes towards women in history is Caryl Churchill, with plays like Light Shining in Buckinghamshire and Vinegar Tom (both 1976). Churchill also puts "historical" characters or types to work in her better known plays Cloud Nine (1979) and Top Girls (1982).

Canadian feminist theatre is the subject of two special issues of Canadian Theatre Review: #43 (Summer 1985), "Feminism and Canadian Theatre", and #69 (Winter 1991), "Canadian Women Playwrights: (Inter)national Contexts".

[18] Lill sounds much like Ursell here (see note 1, above).

[19] There is an element of Brechtian iconoclasm here in Lill's undermining of McClung's heroic stature. There is also, perhaps, in Beynon's own disappointment and disillusionment, a warning against dependency on heroes. At the same time, there is still a non-Brechtian element of hero-building in Lill's eventual evident perception that there is something heroic in Beynon's adherence to principle in the face of strong, bigoted opposition--irritatingly idealistic as that adherence may seem at times. Finally, in a more Brechtian vein, we may detect here, and in plays that display a leftist to New Leftish vision--particularly in the class struggle plays--a belied that while this country still needs heroes, it is possible to look to a day when heroes might no longer be necessary.

[20] The place and plight of aboriginal people has been a theme of modern Canadian theatre from its start, even if the writers have not until recently been aboriginal people themselves. The most famous example, George Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (1967), is occasionally credited with starting the "modern" period in Canadian playwriting.

An early Theatre Passe Muraille collective, directed by Clarke Rogers, explored the myth of Almighty Voice (1974/75). Among the audience for this production was Maria Campbell, a Metis writer and activist, who later combined efforts with Paul Thompson and Linda Griffiths to create Jessica (1982). This story of a Metis woman and her struggle to find her identity is based loosely on Campbell's autobiographical story Halfbreed.

Recently a strong dramatic literature by aboriginal people has emerged, making prominent names such as Tomson Highway, Floyd Favel and others. To date, however, no major Native playwright seems to have engaged with the pre-Columbian, or pre-European, history of aboriginal people, in the way that Nigerian Ola Rotimi, in Kurunmi: An Historical Tragedy (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1971), looks at a pre-European incident of intertribal warfare in West Africa. It appears there is no desire from this direction, either, to disturb the "Golden Age" myth present in The Plainsman, or in the three plays under discussion here.

See the special issue of Canadian Theatre Review 68

(Spring 1991), "Native Theatre," and related articles in CTR #53 (Winter 1987), "Popular Theatre: Politics and Community Development" and 56 (Fall 1988), "Theatre and Ethnicity."

[21] Just as with the "first contacts" plays, none of these plays is written by a member of the immigrant race that sought and was denied entry. Again, the plays seem the works of indignant or radicalized liberals aimed at an audience of complacent liberals--in this case white Anglo-Saxon liberals.

More recent semi-historical plays by members of some affected groups have appeared after my own artificially imposed cut off of 1982, such as Tom Gallay's Tsymbaly (1985), a look at the effect of immigration and cultural adaptation on a Ukrainian-Canadian community, and George Boyd's Shine Boy (1988). See Canadian Theatre Review 56 (Fall 1988), "Theatre and Ethnicity."

Literary (though not necessarily dramatic) treatments of the immigrant experience by members of "ethnic" communities are not new, but seem only recently to have become prominent, or to have moved closer to the "mainstream," or to have become the focus of critical attention. See, for example, special issues of two journals: Canadian Ethnic Studies XIV 1 (1982), "Ethnicity and Canadian Literature"; Canadian Literature, "Supplement 1: A/PART: Papers from the 1984 Ottawa Conference on Language, Culture and Literary Identity in Canada" May 1987; and Canadian Review of Comparative Literature (June/September 1991), "Literatures of Lesser Diffusion." Especially interesting in this last is Tamara J. Palmer, "The Fictionalization of the Vertical Mosaic: The Immigrant, Success and National Mythology" 619-65. Palmer argues that "multicultural and ethnic literature" have "come of age" since the early 1970s, and "have had and are continuing to have a significant impact on our cultural imagination" (619). Palmer's notes are an excellent bibliographic source on the study of "multicultural" literature in Canada.

[22] Referring to Canadian fiction, Robert L. McDougall, "The Dodo and the Cruising Auk: Class in Canadian Literature," in Eli Mandel, ed. Contexts of Canadian Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), suggests:

> Our literature shows what can only be described as an abnormal absence of feeling for class and of concern for what the class structure can do in a developing society to make or mar the life of the individual. . ." (217).

Arising largely at the time of and after this comment, modern Canadian drama, especially the history play, seems not to have been so diffident, but to reflect the wide-ranging study of Canadian class and labour history summarized by Berger (see pages 303-7). Prominent among non-historical plays to also pick up on the class theme are On the Job (1975) and Balconville (1979) by David Fennario.

[23] Walter W. Greg, in Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama: A Literary Inquiry, With Special Reference to the Pre-Restoration Stage in England (London: A. H. Bullen, 1906), notes that a contrast between town and country, or between "pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization" is one of the essential conventions of pastoral literature (5, 7). The idea reappears in Maurice Evans, English Poetry in the Sixteenth Century. London: Hutchison University Library, 1955, rpt. 1967: 89, and Renato Poglioli, The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975, 2.

For further definitions and discussion of pastoral conventions and conventional oppositions, see Paul Alpers, "Convening and Convention in Pastoral Poetry," New Literary History 14. 2 (1983): 277-304, and "What is pastoral?" Critical Inquiry 8 (1981/82): 437-60; William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral. London: Chatto and Windus, 1968; Harold E. Toliver, Pastoral Forms and Attitudes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971 and Raymond Williams, The Country and the City. London: Oxford University Press, 1973. In addition, David M. Halperin provides a useful bibliography as part of Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Just as it has in American cultural history (see, for example, Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964)), the pastoral/Golden Age/New Eden myth seems to occupy a recurrent, though sometimes ironic, place in the Canadian literary imagination, both dramatic and non-dramatic. Dick Harrison, for example, examines a "Garden Motif" in western fiction in Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977). Gwen Pharis Ringwood inverts the conventions of pastoral romance in her 1945 play Stampede, moving the herders (cow, in this case) from the country into the city, to comment on the exercise in nostalgia the Stampede was, even at its inception. More recently, in what is statistically now Canada's second-most urbanized province, Val Jenkins has written The Puff 'N' Blow Boys, a nostalgic celebration of the ranching country myth that still hangs on in Alberta. Her promotion for the original production, at the 1989 Edmonton Fringe Festival, claimed: "It's like leavin' Edmonton an' goin' to Alberta for the weekend." In conversation at that time, Jenkins claimed never to have heard of pastoral conventions: she appears to have, in effect, reinvented them for herself for this occasion and this time. The play has since toured the province and been presented in an expanded version at the Blyth Festival (1992).

[24] It would be hard to claim that any one play alone has "rescued" an important character from obscurity and raised that person or event to prominence in the Canadian "national" cultural vocabulary. If a character or event has attained such mythical status, either that person or event has done so in conjunction with other historical work of the time, or has achieved stature within the more limited (though not necessarily more important) radius of a defined interest group or audience.

[25] I have elsewhere coined the term "Canadian Topical Melodrama" to classify such plays, that similarly deal with contemporary sociological issues by presenting them as clashes between virtuous but repressed or underprivileged interests and some unpleasant, overbearing authority figure or governing body ("Gothic Action in Edmonton" 45).

[26] The issue of a national theatre and a national drama is tied up in part with the issue of a national literature. See, for example, Charles Mair, whose preface to Tecumseh proclaims "the young Canadian author who seeks inspiration [in 'our romantic story'] is helping to create for a young people that decisive test of its intellectual faculties, an original and distinctive literature" (3).

The thrust for a national theatre and a national drama (the two are not the same, though they have at times been referred to as if interchangeable and equivalent) were also behind the Dominion Drama Festival (see Betty Lee, Love and Whisky: The Story of the Dominion Drama Festival (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973)), and the recommendations on "Theatre" in the Massey Commission report, as well as of the Theatre section of the Canada Council. See Denis Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre," in Lecker, ed., Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 71-90, as well as "Declarations of (In)dependence: Adjudicating the Dominion Drama Festival," in Canadian Theatre Review 62 (Spring 1990) 11-18. The whole CTR issue 62 is of interest in this regard.

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